The New REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion

VOLUME XXIV NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1920 NUMBER 300

Contents

The Week 1

Editorials
- While the Armies Decide..... 4
- A Close Season..... 5
- Bertrand Russell on Russia..... 6
- The Housing Crisis..... 7

General Articles
- Is European Capitalism At Stake?..... .....H. N. Brailsford 10
- Our Summer Boarding House.....A Boarder 14
- Lost—A Soul (Verse)...Anna Spencer Twitchell 16
- More Brains, Good Lord!....Norman Hapgood 17
- Modernism in Siena.....Stark Young 18
- How Reaction Helps....!.....John Dewey 21

Reviews of Books
- The American Theatre.....Percy Boynton 23
- The Foreign Visitor.....S. C. C. 25
- From the Yiddish.....Lewis Brown 25

The Week

LLOYD GEORGE, so the Associated Press reports, has no intention of mixing in American politics but he can't resist observing that President Wilson's present policy regarding Russia is "inconsistent with his declaration relating to the Prinkipo conference." Then Mr. Wilson wanted peace. He proposed a conference to secure it. The Soviets agreed to come. The difference between Wilson and Lloyd George today is that the latter still wants peace. "Until peace is fully established between Russia and the rest of the world," he says, with the Italian Premier concurring, "an atmosphere of disturbance and unsettlement will continue to menace the world." Mr. Wilson may stand by the hoary memorandum of some subordinate in the State Department; Millerand may vote for war; but Lloyd George and Giolitti are out for peace with Russia so that there may at last be peace in Europe.

ONE condition in the Russian terms of peace Lloyd George regards as "a gross breach of faith." This is Soviet insistence upon what he calls "a so-called civil army to be drawn from one class" in Poland, and the objections which he raises are easy to understand and, if correctly interpreted by Mr. Lloyd George, legitimate. The rest of Russia's terms do not indicate the jingo party is in the saddle. Russia "recognizes in full the independence and liberty of the Polish Republic" and "solemnly confirms the right of the Polish people to establish its own form of government." The frontier is to be drawn in accordance with Lord Curzon's line, though the Poles are to have more territory east of Bialystok and Cholm. Russia renounces an indemnity from Poland. Certain guarantees (not specifically reported) are demanded against the importation of war materials. Poland is to return all rolling stock and other material removed from Russian territory, to grant complete political and military amnesty, to give Russia the right of free transit, and to distribute land grants in the first place to families of Polish citizens, killed or wounded in the war.

WHAT reply the Polish delegates make to these proposals depends in large part upon the word they get from Paris. Their counter-offensive against the Russians is going well, but they will hardly deceive themselves for a second time into believing they can successfully invade their giant neighbor. Still, if the French Foreign Office wants to block the road to a general peace by having the war continue for the present, the Polish delegates at Minsk may find any reasonable terms of peace too stiff. In the meantime these delegates insist that Poland did not will the war. Polish troops, they declare, marched into Russia simply to give Russians who lived on soil once Polish (before 1772) a chance to declare their allegiance. The chief insistence of the Russian delegation, at Minsk, is that responsibility for each day's war now rests with Poland and the diplomats behind her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SECRETARY COLBY is delighted with the reply his Russian note has drawn from France. "The French Government," he declares, "is in entire agreement with the principles set forth in the American note. It adopts in almost identical words the views of this government regarding the Soviet regime in Russia." The French, to be sure, have given diplomatic recognition to General Baron Wrangel. But "we are disposed," says Mr. Colby, "to regard the declared agreement of France with the principles of the United States as of more significance than any divergence of policy involved in the specific action of France in this single respect." Words, that is, speak louder than action. In any event—"The importance of the French position is that it discloses that the two governments have a common objective." How long ago was it Mr. Wilson declared: "Through the sessions of the conference in Paris it was evident that a militaristic party, under the most influential leadership, was seeking to gain ascendancy in the counsels of France. They were defeated then, but are in control now." What is the "common objective"?

IT was an unfair advantage which the newspaper correspondents took of Senator Harding when they demanded his opinion of Polish-Russian relations. They caught the Republican nominee off his porch, and halfway across the lawn. "The fact is," he explained to them, "I haven't had time to glance at a newspaper today." The correspondents told him what was happening. They informed him, according to the New York Times, "of the reported plan of a Soviet alliance with Germany to crush France and then turn on America and Great Britain." "What genius evolved that?" demanded Mr. Harding. "It reminds me of Napoleon's march on Moscow."

"OWING to the meagre inside information the rest of us receive," continued Mr. Harding, "no one but the President, and possibly the Secretary of State, can comment on any foreign situation." Nevertheless Mr. Harding was ready to go to bat himself. "There will be none of the present foreign policy if we succeed," he told the correspondents; "on the contrary, there will be a complete reversal." Can you take him at his word? If you can, there are lively times ahead. Complete reversal of Mr. Wilson's foreign policy will demand intervention in Mexico, recognition of the Irish republic, peace with Russia, negotiation with the Lenin government, independence for the Philippines, an offensive and defensive alliance with Germany, and war with England, France and Italy. Somewhere short of complete reversal Mr. Harding seems bound to stop.

SO long has woman suffrage been accepted by the civilized world—twenty-one different nations gave votes to women before they could be granted in the American democracy!—and so obstinate has been the opposition of the few stalwarts still fighting at the end, that what would have been an electrifying event a few years back becomes now only the last phase of a long battle in tactics. That battle is won. And however effective may have been the support of one party leader or another, it was the fine courage and wise leadership of the new voters themselves that gave the ballot to the women of America. While statesmen have debated their qualifications as electors they have engineered a feat in statesmanship. Our congratulations go to the enfranchised women. If the new League of Women Voters is a criterion, their entrance into national politics will be not only an act of justice but a promise of distinct achievement.

HOWEVER barren they may find present alternatives in national politics, certain citizens of New York have a rare chance to vote with conviction in a special election which comes this month. The election is held to fill the seats of the five Socialists expelled from the State Assembly five months ago. It was not necessary to be a Socialist — as the action of ex-Justice Hughes testified — to resent so bold an attack upon the principles of representative government. It is not necessary to be a Socialist, in the present election, to vote for the Socialist candidates and for repudiation of the Assembly which expelled them. Use of their votes is the only effective weapon which non-Socialist democrats can employ to express their uncompromising disapproval of an act of legalized but none the less revolutionary violence.

RE-ELECTION of the Socialist candidates will be no easy task. Against Mr. Waldman in the Eighth Manhattan District and Mr. Claessens in the Seventeenth, the Democrats and Republicans have effected fusion. At Albany, five months ago, the Democrats made some show of disapproving the insistence of a Republican Speaker upon expelling the five Socialist Assemblymen. In these two districts, however, they have been ready enough to help the Republicans keep the Socialists from coming back. Against the other Socialist candidates—Mr. Orr, Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Solomon—no fusion has yet been effected. But that is not for want of any will to fuse; it is simply the re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sult of being unable to agree which candidate shall have the inside track. In Ohio there is a merry battle—and in the most hotly contested districts of New York there is partnership. Marion and Columbus declare that it makes all the difference in the world which party wins in November. But willingness to climb aboard the same bandwagon in New York shows that after all Tweedledum has much in common with his brother Tweedledee.

MR. LEWIS of the Mine Workers informs the President that there is no danger of a strike by soft coal miners in the central competitive district. But the mine operators are not so optimistic. The situation, they declare, is "hopelessly deadlocked." In conference at Cleveland, the operators refused to consider granting an increase to any but the day workers—who had demanded an increase of two dollars a day—and the pay of these workers they refused to increase on the same percentage over last year's scale as pick and machine miners had received. On this point the Cleveland conference split. If a new wage scale is now negotiated it must apparently be on a basis of action in each state individually. Meantime we may witness other localized and outlawed strikes. All the mines in the Terre Haute, Clinton and Brazil fields of Indiana are reported closed.

THOSE who want war with Mexico have another unfriendly act to cite in support of intervention. The Mexican government intends to collect its taxes. Some six million pesas are due from oil companies in the form of unpaid exportation taxes. "The Mexican government," declares its Secretary of Finance, "is ready to use all legal means in its power to compel the companies to comply with their obligations." Certain companies claim that the taxes in question are so high as to be confiscatory, since oil is now bringing only 90 cents a barrel at the port. On this point the correspondent of the New York Times in Mexico City offers evidence. The Mexican Secretary of Finance, he says, showed him "a bill of sale of the Aguila and Coruna companies, dating from January to August 8th of the present year, and the lowest prices paid by the steamers Mexico and Jeliasco and other steamers loading at the terminals of Tampico were in January $1, running on a rising scale to $1.40, $1.50 and $1.90, with the latest sales on August 8th at $2.50."

PROMINENCE has been given, in many of the newspapers, to a statement of the Japanese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs made public by the Japanese Embassy in Washington. With the conclusions of this statement most Americans will agree: "We must go straightway to the root of every anti-Japanese and anti-American agitation or movement with the axe of ruthless publicity and education. Light must be thrown on dark places; no sore must be allowed to fester unseen." That is good advice. Japan can follow it by making specific declaration of her purposes in Shantung and Saghalin; we can anticipate a crisis otherwise certain if we realize that the "Japanese question" in California cannot concern the people of California alone. There is no denying the fact that national statesmen of one country and local statesmen of the other have robbed both peoples of confidence in one another's motives.

ONE encouraging development in the Far East is the new contact between the young students of China and Japan. For years the militarists of the two countries have worked in partnership; now the students ask their turn. At the end of last year two undergraduates of the University of Tokyo went to China and addressed a mass meeting of Chinese students at Shanghai. This did not suit the local Japanese authorities. They advised their government to keep its students home. The government acted on the advice. It instructed every university in Japan to forbid the sending of delegations into China. Recently, however, the Chinese students have themselves gone visiting. Five of them have come from the University of Peking to Tokyo, to exchange opinions with the young leaders of Japan.

IN one of the Japanese journals, Chuo-Koron, Professor Sakuzo Yoshino of the University of Tokyo gives an account of these student conferences. The best hope of peace and progress in the Far East is a rapprochement of the liberal forces in China and Japan, however impotent they now may be in the latter country, and for such a rapprochement Dr. Yoshino pleads. "The well-wishers of the two nations . . . . cannot attain their ends because of the perverted relations existing between the militarists of the two countries. The result is the recurrence of the violent anti-Japanese movement . . . . It is most urgent that a real understanding should be restored, and the only means to attain this end is to build up the movement which is now only beginning—and that is the understanding of the students of the two nations."

RIOTING in Upper Silesia, where a dozen French soldiers and a hundred Germans are reported killed or injured, is one manifestation of what seems to be a resentment against Allied rule now general

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

throughout industrial Germany. A strike followed the report that the French had smuggled arms from Silesia into Poland, and rioting came later. Any incident of open hostility might have provoked it. German workmen are restless. What happened in Upper Silesia, at Memel and at Danzig testifies to that fact. In the opinion of some of the American newspaper correspondents the workmen of Germany are turning to radical leadership. "Communism is rapidly gaining ground with the German proletariat," cables Mr. Cyril Brown to the New York World. "Forerunners of a second revolution continue to multiply. From Essen comes a report that the Communists are unfolding an intensive propaganda along the whole Rhenisch-Westphalian industrial region, with large Communist meetings at Essen, Dusseldorf and Eberfeld, the Communist leaders appealing to the workers to seize power."

IN 1911 the people of California adopted a constitutional amendment providing for the initiative. Since that time only thirty measures have been submitted to the people by initiative petition, and but eight of those measures have been made law. Enemies of the initiative do not charge that any of these laws are unwise or undesirable. Yet it is now proposed, by a new constitutional amendment, that the power of the initiative be taken away from the people of the state, in all matters relating to the assessment and collection of taxes, unless twenty-five percent of the electors have signed the initiative petitions. That is a prohibitive figure, and if the proposed amendment is adopted the people of California will practically lose the initiative insofar as it applies to matters of taxation. Even so conservative a state as Massachusetts requires signatures of only eight percent of the voters to bring an initiative proposal up for consideration. Interests which profess to fear the single tax are working to take away from the state of California one of the elementary instruments of popular government.

While the Armies Decide

IN an interview secured by a correspondent of the New York World, M. Paderewski goes to the core of the Russo-Polish war.

> I was against war when there was opportunity to make peace on favorable terms. At the time I was Prime Minister I favored doing so. So I went to Paris and laid the matter before the Supreme Council. I asked to be allowed to accept these terms, but they would not agree to that.

These sentences reveal a good deal. In the first place they assume what Messrs. Wilson and Colby deny, that it is possible to make peace with Russia. It is a question of terms for Poland, as it has been for Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, or for any other nation bordering on Russia. M. Paderewski, who is no friend of the Bolsheviks, does not argue that a peace cannot be negotiated.

But it was not negotiated. And the reason lay not in the will of the Polish government but in the will of the Allied governments. Let him proceed.

> We were bound to the Allies, we were their protegés, they had guaranteed our independence, and we had to abide by their decision. They themselves were then supporting three Russian armies in the field.

The "independence" of Poland, in short, did not include the sovereign right to make a favorable peace. The "independence" of Poland consisted in the compulsion to fight a war which was not necessary to the interests of Poland. Let any Republican who has insisted lately that he would not surrender our sovereign right to declare war or peace, ask himself whether the Poland revealed by M. Paderewski is an independent state. To the average common-sense Poland was and is a vassal state, or as M. Paderewski puts it, a "protegé."

But the candor of the ex-Prime Minister of Poland does not end with these admissions.

> France and England were at war with Russia long before we were because in 1918 we were not independent.

That is the plain truth, but M. Paderewski might have added America. France, England and America have been at war with Russia for two years. Poland was their vassal, and the Polish invasion of Russia is a part of the general but desultory war which without formal notice, and in defiance of national and international law, is being waged by the Great Powers against Russia.

Of this general war the Polish battle front is merely one sector. The main outlines of the war on that front are simple. The Poles attacked and carried their invasion several hundred miles beyond their frontier to Kiev. The Russians counter-attacked and carried their invasion to the gates of Warsaw, the Danzig Corridor and around Lemberg. The Poles in turn counter-attacked with success in the northern sectors, while the Russian advance in Galicia continued to develop. So the situation stands on Monday, August 23rd, when this is written.

In the meantime there are three sets of diplomatic negotiations going on. At Minsk behind the Russians lines, the Poles and Russians are in a leisurely way discussing an armistice and peace.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At London, general peace negotiations have developed to the verge of success. Finally, at Paris there is an open desire to continue the war, through the Poles and Wrangel now, and through every one else later, if possible. This French policy takes great comfort in the Wilson-Colby note though it is in direct contradiction of the avowed purpose of that note.

Undoubtedly the immediate future will reflect the military position. Should the Polish advance show a fair chance of developing into the possibility of a military victory so complete as to overthrow the Soviet government, then the peace negotiations at Minsk and London will undoubtedly fail. The war, not being a war of Polish defense, but of French aggression in alliance with reactionary forces the world over, the war will not stop if it promises the annihilation of the present Russian government. If on the other hand, the Poles merely recover their own territory, the world may expect a truce, profoundly unstable in character, which may develop either into a general peace under British and Italian leadership, or into further intrigue under French leadership and Wilsonian self-delusion.

No clear policy can emerge while the armies are in motion. When they are again at rest, a number of alternatives will appear. On the hypothesis of a Polish victory sufficient to clear Poland proper of the Soviet armies, a choice would have to be made between peace on the basis of the Russian terms, reduced somewhat, but without a general peace; or a peace that is generous to Poland with a general peace; or no peace at all, and another attempt to plunge into the limitless plains of Russia. This latter alternative would involve profound social disturbance behind the Polish lines and perhaps throughout Europe. If it succeeded, and the Soviets were overthrown in Moscow and Petrograd it would involve probably years of civil disturbance before another national power could be established. The plan of a truce on the frontier of Poland, such as Mr. Wilson proposes, would involve unending intrigue by Russia to break the encirclement and by France particularly to overthrow the government. The plan of a general peace for which Mr. Lloyd George and Signor Giolitti stand, alone offers hope to Europe, because it alone can produce demobilization and the resumption of economic life. It will, therefore, be interesting to see whether Poland is sufficiently independent to make peace on terms similar to those she was forbidden to accept months ago. If she is independent enough to do what M. Paderewski wanted to do, then British and Italian policy will carry the day.

But there is another hypothesis which though slim must be considered. It is that the tactical success of the Poles in the north may be the prelude to a strategic victory by General Budenny in the south. In that case Russia will dictate the peace, and the interesting thing to watch will be whether the moderates or the extremists are in the saddle. It will be fair to assume, we believe, that the faction in Russia which accomplishes peace is the faction which will wield power for some time to come. If the moderates can secure peace and trade by negotiation, the evolution of Russia may well be towards democracy. If only the Bonapartists can compel peace, then the latent imperialism of Russia may develop, and it will not matter much whether that imperialism is called the Third International of the Bolsheviks or the Holy Russia of a Wrangel.

A Close Season

WHEN posterity finds time to focus its eyes upon us, and to consider our late nineteenth and early twentieth century ways, posterity will doubtless grin at, among other things, our treatment of Presidential candidates. And the grin will not be undeserved. For the better part of three months we expect every candidate, whether he travels about the United States or sticks to his front porch, to spend a lot of time standing upon his legs and talking about four or five things called issues or about one thing called a paramount issue. Such a demand is obviously unfair. It is hardly decent. No ordinary candidate can do this sort of thing, month after month, day in and day out, without going stale. Sooner or later comes the day when he sickens, if he is a normal human being, at the prospect of making another speech on the same old momentous and threadbare topics. Sooner or later he is bound to lose his batting eye. Although he may have had, when he began his campaign, a pretty gift for making the worse appear the better reason, some time or other he is sure to run into a few weeks of heavy going, during which his only achievement is to make the better reason look like no reason at all.

The prosperity of a speech, to be sure, lies in the ears of those who go to hear it. That is as true now as on the day when somebody said it first. But to concede its truth is not to weaken the case for that reform of campaign methods which we wish to recommend. In the early days of a campaign, when voters know next to nothing about a candidate, 1920 variety, a natural curiosity bids them pay attention to whatever the candidate may care to say. They are more than willing to listen. They like to watch the pig coming out of the poke. Later on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again, in the two or three weeks just before election day, curiosity as to the outcome steps into the shoes left vacant by the death and burial of curiosity as to the candidate's program and brains. In between these two periods of alertness there is a period of torpor, throughout which the weary voters yawn and stretch themselves and think of something else. During September, suppose we say, taking one campaign with another, the campaigners might as well shut up shop. When a man who has been talking too much faces an audience that has been too much talked to, what result can you look for except slackness and ineffectiveness and boredom and inspissated gloom?

Of course September is only a manner of speaking. For the sake of clearness we have treated the three periods of a campaign as more distinct than they are in fact. All we insist on is that there ought to be a close season, occurring near the middle of every campaign and lasting not less than one month, for the duration of which every candidate must be as mute as a Trappist. He could pass this time as he liked. Senator Harding would be free to drink the largest draughts of intellectual day that Mr. Elihu Root thought it safe to pour into a vessel of such moderate capacity. Governor Cox might persuade Lord Robert Cecil to come over incog and explain, with Secretary Baker as a recalcitrant listener, his reasons for having opposed the inclusion of Article X in the Covenant. Or either candidate would be at liberty to spend his vacation in learning a little Russian or a little more golf. Nothing would be barred except public speaking, writing letters for publication or giving out statements to the press. In some years, when a gentlemen's agreement among the candidates would by definition be one-sided, there would have to be a penalty, such as the transfer of a few hundred thousands from one campaign fund to the other, for every breakage of silence in the close season.

If this reform be rejected, after a solemn referendum, as too drastic, a milder substitute may answer the purpose well enough. Instead of total silence, let there be a silence about every subject that either platform has pronounced upon, mussed up or palpably dodged. Let there be light upon what the candidate thinks about things in general, such as Methodism, uniform divorce laws, the metric system, Zane Grey, Peano or Frege, doughnuts, the undistributed middle, the intentional pass, the nude in art, Jack Lait. Let him disclose which of the following expressions he would can first—the psychological moment, in terms of, reaction, complex, clubman, limping into port. Let him produce authentic copies of three letters, written and composed by him before he became a candidate for any office—one declining to subscribe, one to somebody in affliction, one to a child less than ten years old. You can learn a lot about a man from his letters of condolence. A man whom children do not care for will usually bear watching. Rien ne vaut l'estime des petits: leur jugement est presque toujours celui de Dieu.

By our present method we do come more or less near finding out which side of some questions a candidate is on, and what legislation he would deem himself sufficiently his own master to urge upon Congress. But we gain a very defective notion of the man's character and of his position on the intellectual map. Such a notion could be gained more quickly and with less suffering if he discoursed more at large. The effect of a campaign as it is nowadays conducted is to lead us along a narrow deepening ditch sunk in the candidate's mind. We learn the same thing over and over about soil and subsoil. Only now and then, and by accident, do we get a good look at the general lie of the land. And we harshly forget what rubbish we too should be talking if we had to talk all the time.

Bertrand Russell On Russia

SEVERAL correspondents have written to the New Republic asking for comment on Bertrand Russell's articles about Soviet Russia, recently published by the Nation.

The articles are extraordinarily interesting from two angles—as they throw light on Russell and as they throw light on Russia. They reveal Mr. Russell as an unimpeachably candid human being. They reveal Russia as a country governed by a war dictatorship consisting of two factions—one tending towards Bonapartism, the other tending towards a radical amendment of the original communist theory. The articles show further that the Bonapartist faction thrives on war, and they prophesy that the evolutionist element would thrive on peace. They point out that the government of Russia is not democratic and that there is privilege, corruption, bureaucracy and militarism. They show also the immense danger to the world which would come from the imitation of Bolshevism by the socialist and labor parties of other countries. They argue that the Third International thrives on intervention, war, blockade, and censorship. The articles themselves illustrate the immense effect of permitting a convinced and sincere radical to disillusionize himself by seeing Russia through his own eyes.

There is nothing surprising or novel about this. So far as we are able to judge, Mr. Russell's picture of Russia coincides with our own. Communism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pre-supposes a gregariousness which human beings do not possess; it involves a degree of centralization and of social control which are inevitably destructive of liberty; it proposes a social organization that is altogether too officious and all-pervading for the development of invention and enterprise, and for the satisfaction of variety. Communism strikes us as a dreary ideal could it be established, and for our part we look forward to an entirely different line of progress. We look forward to an increasing socialization of industry, but to the nationalization of very few industries. We do not wish to see an aggrandized economic state, but the creation of a better social equilibrium through the development parallel to each other, and as checks upon each other, of enlightened capitalism, voluntary co-operation, workers' participation in management, and the public ownership of a few basic services on which all other forms of activity depend.

The Bolshevik method of establishing communism through a temporary dictatorship of a minority has always seemed to us as without justification if it is intended to revolutionize the world for the better. The dictatorship in Russia has little to do with social progress. It has had an enormous amount to do with saving a demoralized people from complete disintegration. The dictatorship of Lenin is like the dictatorship of Clemenceau in 1918 or the dictatorship of Ludendorff. It belongs to the history of the war, not to the annals of progress. It performs the same function and is to be judged by the same criteria. It has probably saved Russia from dismemberment and subjection. Considering the odds against it, the Russian dictatorship is no doubt one of the ablest in history, but it has no value as an example to any country that is not the victim of aggression or of subsidized civil war.

We share Mr. Russell's belief that no government could overthrow the Soviets and reorganize Russia within a decent period of time. We share his belief that peace and trade will do to Russia what they have done in the United States and everywhere else. The end of war will revive the factions and oppositions of peace, and that will mean that the Bolshevik autocracy must surrender power and seek a democratic support. This must bring with it an abandonment of dogma, enormous concessions to the instinct for private property, and a real guarantee against whatever danger there would remain from physical aggression by the Third International. The extremists cannot, in our opinion, remain extremists and hold power for any important period of time in a Russia at peace with the world. The momentum would be lost, and could not be regained, for once the preternatural morale of war subsides, there comes a period of relaxed conservatism and of concentration upon private interest.

The Third International has a false ideal and a pernicious method, but its importance is grossly exaggerated. While Russia is at war with the world, it serves the Russian people just as Northcliffe served the British and Creel served the American. It works against the enemies of Russia. And just as Northcliffe or Creel interfered with the internal affairs of Germany and Austria as effectively as they knew how, so the Third International makes all the trouble it can for the governments that send tanks and poison gas against Russia. Give Russia and Central Europe peace and hope, and for a while the Third International will palpitate because war psychology persists. Then the Third International will fade and become nothing but a loose and not very significant collection of left wing minorities. On the other hand, make war on Russia, and the Third International will threaten Europe because it will be the religion of a new Bonapartism.

The Housing Crisis

WHAT shall we expect of the New York legislature, assembled in special session to take measures affecting the housing problem? The Governor and the legislators no doubt desire earnestly to bring relief from a condition that is becoming daily more intolerable. We may take their good will for granted. The pertinent questions are, what have they the power to do? Will they try to go to the bottom of the problem, and make at least an initial move toward a permanent solution, or will they content themselves with mere sedatives like the rent legislation of the last session?

It is not necessary to dwell upon the figures for housing shortage in a city like New York. Every tenant in the city knows by intimate experience that he is lucky if he finds suitable accommodations within his means. Hundreds of thousands do not, and are forced to live in conditions of overcrowding and discomfort that rob life of much of its value. In almost every great city, and in most of the lesser cities and towns similar conditions prevail. According to the calculations of the United States Housing Corporation there were a million families that needed houses before the war, and the shortage of housing has since become greatly aggravated. Only 70,000 houses were built in 1919 instead of the 500,000 that were needed. For every hundred "homes"—whether owned or rented, whether houses or apartments—we have now one hundred and twenty-one families. The Guaranty Trust Company, on the basis of the data furnished by the Geological Survey, calculates that the shortage in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

building for the three years 1917-19 amounted to one and one-third years of normal construction. But this represents all buildings, and it is precisely in dwellings that construction has lagged most seriously. Normally thiry percent of the buildings constructed are dwellings, but in 1919 only fifteen percent were. Not to linger over disheartening details, we are safe in saying that if the machinery of dwelling construction were to put on full steam today it would be two and a half years, if not three, before the American people could be as adequately housed as they were in 1913.

But the machinery of dwelling construction is not going to put on full steam today, nor will it for many a day. There are too many difficulties in the way. In many parts of the country building labor is scarce, and not normally efficient. The failure of the railways to give adequate transportation service is another serious difficulty. Almost every building enterprise is retarded by failure in the deliveries of one essential material or another. Capital for building is hard to secure in a period like this when industrial and commercial demands are inflated by the high price level. But unquestionably the cause that outweighs all the rest is the remarkable expansion in building costs. There is hardly any kind of construction that does not cost at least twice as much as it did four years ago. According to the Timber Depletion report of the Forest Survey a frame house of a given plan cost $4,240 in 1915, $7,724 in October, 1919, and $11,820 in February, 1920. In September, 1920, the cost would be still higher, and would certainly amount to three times the cost of 1915.

It may be said, with justice, that the rise in building material and building labor is no more marked than the rise in many commodities of daily use; food, clothing, shoes, etc. The production and consumption of those commodities have not been checked by high costs; why should that of dwellings? There is all the difference in the world between high priced consumables and high priced investments. Perhaps next year one will be able to buy shoes for half the present price, but that will not make a problem out of the old shoes left over from this year of high prices. If there were any prospect of building prices being cut in half next year, it would be a desperate expedient to build at present prices. With the fall in prices the value of this year's house would come down to cost of duplication. For one year's use, or one year's rent, the builder would have sacrificed half of his capital value.

Of course, building costs are not going to be cut in half in one year. Some of them, notably lumber prices, will remain at a high level, though perhaps lower than that of today. The fact remains that even such moderate declines as must be anticipated would suffice to cancel the builder's profit, unless rentals are fixed at such levels as business can afford to pay but the seeker for dwelling accommodations can not. That, we take it, is the real reason why commercial building goes forward and housing does not. And we are wondering—respectfully wondering—what the New York legislature is going to do about it. Exempt new housing construction and new mortgages from taxation? Good; that might offset a ten percent depreciation due to falling building costs. It would not reassure investors who are afraid of a twenty or thirty percent depreciation. Permit more generous rents? There is a limit on what the traffic will bear, and we appear to be very near that limit already.

We have no right to demand the impossible from a state legislature, and to insist on immediate relief from housing shortage and high rents is to demand the impossible. What we have a right to demand is that the legislature should face the facts and put to itself and to the people the question whether we shall ever have a satisfactory solution of the housing problem so long as we rely on competitive private enterprise to supply our housing needs. They are not supplied now; that is a notorious fact. They could not have been supplied, under that system. It is not primarily because our private builders lack enterprise; it is not primarily because anybody anywhere is profiteering; it is not primarily because our tax burdens rest heavily upon improvements. There are plenty of instances of stupid disregard of opportunities to build profitably; plenty of instances of profiteering; and the maleficence of a taxation system which mulcts the improver and goes easy on the speculator is patent and notorious. But these are like a superficial rash, chiefly interesting as symptomatic of a deeper malady. That malady is peculiarly acute today, but there has never been a time, since the modern movement of population to the cities began, when the system of competitive enterprise has provided adequate housing for the mass of the working population. The commitee on reconstruction of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects sums up the matter precisely in a letter to Senator Calder. "The manufacture for profit of the skilled wage earner's home, never sufficient in quantity or quality, has now ceased. The manufacture for profit of the unskilled wage earner's home has, largely speaking, never existed."

The skilled and unskilled laborers are not the whole of society. There still remain wide classes for whom houses can be manufactured at a profit, although it is for those classes that the proverb was coined: "Fools build houses for the wise to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inhabit." The point is that there can be no health and no stability in a society that fails to make adequate provision for the decent housing of its manual workers. According to press reports the business men of Bridgeport, recognizing the natural relation between stewing in overcrowded tenements and social unrest, have addressed themselves to the task of providing adequate housing, without regard to profit, and have already succeeded in abating markedly not only the unrest among the workers but their own terrors over the advance of Bolshevism. We do not vouch for the reports of progress achieved, but assume it to be a myth, there is a sound moral in it.

When private enterprise does not meet a necessary public need, public intervention is required, even in the interest of the general system of private enterprise itself. New York's landlords are not properly housing New York's population. Then it is New York's business to do it. But immediately the question arises, how could the city, even though administered honestly and efficiently, offer better accommodations at the price, or equal accommodations more cheaply, than private enterprise? And above all, how could it meet the present condition of inflated costs more satisfactorily than private enterprise meets it?

We may observe that our system of land tenure —a feudalistic inheritance, not a capitalistic invention—works under urban conditions to produce incredible waste in construction. In cities like New York there are wide areas given over to wretched, unsanitary slum tenements which, systematically developed, would house more than their present population well and at moderate rentals. Why does not private enterprise buy up those areas, clear them off and reconstruct for the profit there is in it? That will strike anyone who has experienced the existing obstacles to improvement as a silly question. Profitable reconstruction requires the throwing together of numerous independent land holdings, and each owner is in a position to hold up the undertaking unless he is bought off at his own price.

Besides, even if it were possible to put together all the holdings needed for an important improvement without encountering the blackmailing, or worse, the obstinate owner, the net effect of the improvement would be to raise ground values in all the adjoining territory and thus to put additional improvements out of reach. If a city were to take over, at present investment values, the whole area likely to be needed for housing, whatever unearned increment accrued as a result of adjacent improvement would be available for further improvement, instead of acting as a bar against it. And in a time of inflated values a city which administered its housing wtih a view to securing only the interest and amortization on its bonds together with funds to build against normal increase in population, would still be in a position to build. The tenants of New York are probably paying enough, in increased rentals, to provide all the additional housing that is required. But they are paying the money, not directly to provide housing, but to improve the income of the owners of houses already built, in order that soon or sometime somebody else may perchance be tempted, by the spectacle of a prosperous landlord class, to increase the supply of building. The city could raise rents and build forthwith. Private owners raise rents, as matters stand, and build or not, as they choose, and it is the part of practical wisdom not to build.

Competitive building for profit has never worked well, works abominably now and will certainly never work tolerably in the future. If the New York legislature recognizes that, the special session may be the beginning of great things. It may put on a bandage here or there, to enable us to limp along less painfully with things as they are so long as they must remain such. But it will count its chief work to set in motion the process of constitutional amendment which will permit the public authorities of state and city to follow common sense in making a public service out of housing. The legislature is afraid that public housing would accrue to the benefit of Tammany, not to that of the people? Human ingenuity is quite competent to devise an efficient and non-political control of such a service. No human ingenuity could contrive a system so certain to work perversely as the one under which we are living. In going over to public housing, assume that we are flying to evils we know not of. We are safe in staking our future on the superior intolerableness of those we now have.

The New
REPUBLIC
A Journal of Opinion

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AND COPYRIGHT, 1920, IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY THE REPUBLIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 421 WEST TWENTY-FIRST STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y. HERBERT CROLY, PRESIDENT; ROBERT HALLOWELL, TREASURER

EDITORS
HERBERT CROLY CHARLES MERZ
FRANCIS HACKETT WALTER LIPPMANN
ALVIN JOHNSON PHILIP LITTELL
SIGNE TOKSVIG, Assistant Editor

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION FIFTY-TWO ISSUES, FIVE DOLLARS IN ADVANCE. SINGLE COPIES FIFTEEN CENTS, CANADIAN SUBSCRIPTION FIVE DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS PER YEAR IN ADVANCE. FOREIGN SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR COUNTRIES IN THE POSTAL UNION, SIX DOLLARS PER YEAR IN ADVANCE; REMITTANCE TO BE MADE BY INTERNATIONAL POSTAL MONEY ORDER.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER, NOVEMBER 6, 1914, AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N. Y., UNDER THE ACT OF MARCH 3, 1879.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is European Capitalism at Stake?*

IS the capitalist system breaking down in Europe as a method of production? The question may sound to most readers absurd, and when it is put in its concrete form, it may appear absurder still. Is Europe nearing a point, within a few years, when it will be generally evident, that under the capitalist system we can no longer obtain the food, clothing and housing necessary to maintain our present populations at a civilized level of comfort and well-being? In Central Europe, in Italy and in Russia every intelligent man and woman has been forced, by the dire experience of privation, to put this question and to answer it according to his lights. In England, though we are alarmed by the fall in the real value of money, and know that high prices mean the scarcity of goods, our case is still so far endurable, that few of us have begun to question the ability of a society based on profit as its motive force, to provide us with our daily bread. Even to those of us who have seem something of the present plight of the continent, the question may seen audacious. It is so much easier and so much less disturbing to say, what is true, that the visible decline of material civilization on the continent is due to a protracted war, a rigorous blockade and a bad peace. These are the immediate causes of the shortage of goods. But what if the war, the blockade and the peace are themselves the result of forces and ways of thinking inseparable from capitalist imperialism? Perhaps in this savage war and this merciless peace, our capitalist society has revealed a lack that is suicidal of the spirit of fraternity and mutual aid. Perhaps it is this moral fault which discloses itself, slightly in England but tragically on the continent, in the shortage of bread, clothes and houses.

All of us have felt, if only in a moment of revelation, as we passed the beggar in the road or looked into the dreary dilapidation of a slum, that these broken lives and inhuman streets condemn our whole social system. It is, or was, however, a solid structure. Whatever the saint or the poet might see in the case of the beggar, the fact was and still is that our capitalist society did survive acres of slums and thousands of beggars, long crises of unemployment and years of scarcity. In spite of all this, it did produce the goods. Populations survived and multiplied, and on the whole the general level of comfort and education tended to rise. It is a question of scale and degree. Can this same capitalist civilization survive the lapse of whole nations into a slum existence? We used to speak of the submerged tenth among ourselves. The problem now is of the submerged half in Europe. Poverty on this scale raises the general question. As the months and years go by, with their risks of fresh wars and revolutions, can this capitalist system, which has shown itself so egoistic and so predatory, revise what it has done, reverse the working of these motives, and make of Europe once more a habitable continent? Or will the verdict of time and experience, given not in cold blood, but amid the despairs, bereavements and nervous instability of semi-starvation, be that capitalism, evolving as it has done on militarist and imperialist lines, can no longer produce the goods which the millions of civilized men require?

This way of stating the question was not the usual line of approach before the war. No one had then the audacity to doubt that a capitalist society could continue a production adequate at least to the demand for a bare subsistence. There was, to be sure, some economic criticism of the system. Every one had to admit the element of waste in the competitive system. The simplest of us have marvelled at the sight of half-a-dozen competing milk-carts serving the same suburban street. A Royal Commission has said some plain things, apparently with little or no effect, about the waste involved in the competitive production of coal. We are all inured to asking, when we buy a much advertised article, how much of the price represents the thing itself, and how much the advertisement. The land values movement explored one aspect of this question. The cooperative movement was wide awake to another. But while we were aware that capitalism is vulnerable to an economic attack, it was on the whole the moral aspect which chiefly moved us. People who never dream of questioning the system which expects us all to work for the sole end of profit, are outraged by the ugly spectacle of "profiteering."

The war brought with it in every country a revival of the primitive social instincts. We were all in danger. We felt through several years as the primeval clan or tribe must have felt in its vivid life of continual peril and collective ambition. The class struggle was repressed, and party warfare suspended. Even at home the nation made its continual appeal to the motive of disinterested service, and that motive worked, amid the drab surroundings of capitalist mass production in munition fac-

* This article will form the introductory chapter to a new book by Mr. Brailsford entitled After the Peace.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tories. In the army men were released for four years from the ordinary working of economic motives. They acted in this gigantic business of warfare as primitive peoples act in the ordinary routine of life. They acted under the spell of patriotic duty, and proved that the deepest thing in human nature, is not the competitive but the social and cooperative instinct. The average man is taught by all his pastors and masters in a capitalist society that the hope of gain, whether in the form of profits or salary, is the one effective stimulus to effort. So it is, under the present industrial system. Yet something awakened in the breasts of these millions of men, which caused them under the spur of an instinct of social service, to face the dangers and privations, the horror and monotony of trench warfare, which very few would endure even for unlimited gain. To many of these men, though they were not fully conscious of it, the capitalist system, with its crassly self-regarding motives must have seemed in some dim way irrelevant, even incongruous, when they returned to it. To spend four years in risking life and health without thought of reward for the mass of one's fellows dimly envisaged as a nation, and then to come back to serve some syndicate in the effort to extract the maximum of profit with the minimum of service from these same fellow-citizens, regarded as consumers,—here was a contradiction which caused many a man to feel vaguely ill-at-ease, even when it did not set him thinking.

However this may be, it is the motive of social service which speaks in all the more vital and constructive of our contemporary labor motives—in the building guild above all, and hardly less clearly in the miners' demand for the socialization of the miners. A new way of life emerges here, something more broadly social and more constructive than the inevitably defensive attitude of the older trade unionism. The other side of these movements implies no less obviously a moral criticism of capitalism. Labor demands with growing insistence the self-governing guild or workshop. It feels the vanity, the slightness of that narrow old-world conception of democracy, which has ended autocracy in the state only to entrench it in industry. Where a man, by the mere fact that he owns land, mines or machines, can dictate to his fellowmen the conditions of their daily lives, there is no liberty. Nor is there even the beginning of democracy, while wealth, by its ownership of the press, controls our vision of the world, and weaves the texture of men's minds, as a loom weaves cotton. The sense that we are neither free nor self-governing, the craftsman's passion to express himself in better work, the wish to substitute the motive of gain, and also perhaps that unsatisfied prophetic vision as old as the French Revolution, which tells us that the institutions under which we live depress our growth and stunt our development—these on the whole are the motives, all of them ethical, which favor the slow growth of socialistic thinking and organization in Great Britain. A socialism inspired by these tendencies will be academic, and idealistic. It does not feel its problem urgent. It has to admit that capitalism does on the whole provide for most of us the elementary goods of life. It is critical, but mainly from the standpoint of a higher moral and social ideal. It is not impatient. Nothing is irreparably sacrificed by delay. It is not stung by terror or need into violent action. Capitalism does on the whole deliver the goods.

The march of events may possibly bring even comfortable England before many years have passed, to ask the more disturbing question—can capitalism continue to produce the goods? There is some anxiety already. In the poorer middle-class the standard of life has fallen since the war. There are signs among the manual workers that the motive of earning high wages no longer, for some reason, seems to be an adequate stimulus to maximum production. The pressure of taxation reveals among the employing class a phenomenon curiously resembling the policy of "ca' canny." When the Excess Profits Tax was increased, there is said to have been a rather noticeable tendency to cancel orders. The state by this limitation of profits seems to have impaired the working of profit-making motive. And yet the state has not begun to face the problem of paying off the war-debt. So far from reducing it, it adds to it. What would happen, if the effort were really made in earnest? Every one of our late allies is confronted by this dilemma and shirks it. To go on with the present debt and the present expenditure, means, not perhaps for England, but for every other people, literal bankruptcy. To tax adequately, on the other hand, might rob this capitalist society of the only motive for industry to which it is trained to respond—expectation of high profits. It is possible that experience even in these islands may one day confront us with the fundamental problem of finding, if our civilization is to survive, an alternative to capitalist production.

What, if a victorious capitalist society had been capable of thought for the common good, would have been its policy at the end of the war? The fact which overshadowed all others in the world, was the stoppage of production, the immeasurable injury to all the means of production, the dearth of goods, and all that this means in misery, star-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vation, ill-health and mental disturbance. A bureau of statisticians in Denmark has estimated the loss of lives due to the war at about forty millions. The reckoning includes of course with the slain, the excess of death over the normal mortality among the civilian population, and the decrease in births. The war, in short, had wiped out in Europe a population equal to that of France. There was the first and most grievous source of loss. The devastation was, if not the worst, certainly the most arresting aspect of the whole ghastly panorama. But more alarming by far than the devastation was the fact that the entire industry of Central Europe, owing to the blockade, stood idle for want of raw materials. Everything was short, from food to clothes, from cattle to locomotives. There were whole regions, bigger than the British Isles, notably that Russo-Polish borderland, which the Grand Duke Nicholas gutted in his retreat, from which every trace of civilization had disappeared. If the minds of our statesmen could have shed the artificial thinking of the war, they would have seen their problem in terms of goods. To talk of making democracy secure was the rhetoric of a man thinking amid American plenty. What democracy wanted then, wants still and will want for years to come, is bread and sugar and butter, plain warm clothes, medicines and soap, ploughs and lorries and locomotives, coal and cotton and iron. The problem of problems was to supply these things, to stimulate and organize their mass-production. The Allied governments had faced a similar problem during the war, when they organized the mass-production of shells. That was the problem of war. The problem of peace was to organize the production of necessary things as promptly, and on an even larger world-wide scale. In November, 1918, this could have been done. The victors had unlimited authority and prestige. Examine what in fact they did, and one might suppose that their conscious aim had been to aggravate and perpetuate the shortage. Instead of turning the war-time control of industry to this beneficent purpose they abolished first the international and then the national controls of industry, shipping and raw materials. Instead of turning all the metal-industries to the making of locomotives, lorries and productive machinery, they allowed them to revert to the making of luxuries. More incredible still, they prolonged the blockade of Central Europe for nine months, and tightened it as it never had been tightened during the war. What was Germany? An enemy if you will, a sinner if you must talk morals. But Germany was also by far the most productive portion of the continent. If a far-sighted internationally-minded capitalist thinker in power could have foreseen this doubt that the world-shortage would cause men to ask whether a capitalist system can ensure production, he would have acted in precisely the reverse way. He would have poured raw materials and fertilizers into every German port. He would not merely have permitted, he would have insisted, that every lathe, every forge, every loom in Germany should work to its fullest capacity. He would have hurried his commands to every camp of war-prisoners, and packed these wretched men on to the first available ship, not from humanity, but from the resolve to employ their labor power to the best advantage. As for Russia, one need not pause to say that he would have avoided the lunacy of our inglorious expeditions and our subsidized civil war. He would have inquired what were Moscow's terms to resume the production and export of grain, timber, flax and oil. So far from setting barriers between the idle factory in Berlin and the hoarded grain of South Russia, he would have ordered Berlin, on pain of a victor's displeasure, to make locomotives for Moscow in exchange for Russian wheat. If this hard work had interrupted the diplomacy and the elections, the map-drawing and the reckoning of indemnities, the delay would not have irked him. One does not save civilization by drawing maps. One saves it by food and fuel, by the work which restores sanity to the artisan, hope to the mother and health to the child.

The follies of this first winter of half-peace produced their instant effects. While the Allies were still debating the first of their series of treaties, the blockade and famine brought about successful communist revolutions in Hungary and Bavaria, not to mention momentary attempts, serious enough to be symptomatic, in many German towns. This warning taught nothing to Paris. It elaborated a peace which seemed designed to perpetuate the economic death of half a continent. One may sum up the Treaty of Versailles in a sentence. It robbed Germany at once of the means of production, and of the motive for production. While this treaty stands unrevised, there can be no resumption, save on the puniest scale, of the activity which in the generation before the war had made Germany the workshop of the continent. But Germany, the reader objects, was an enemy, a disturber of the peace, the practitioner of an especially virrulent form of militarism. Grant the moral case against her. We are talking economics. Her ruin is the biggest factor in the world-shortage, as the exclusion of Russia from the European grain market is second. No one can dispute that the sole reason, after the armistice, for the blockade of Russia and the war upon Russia, was a blundering

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instinct of our capitalistic society. It reckoned on its ability to destroy the world's first socialist republic by arms, and it forgot that in the process it might create a shortage of goods dangerous to itself. In these two achievements, the laming of German industry and the pushing of Russia outside the European system of trade, our victorious capitalist society showed a lack of the elementary social instinct of self-preservation. It worked against life, against creation, against production. It organized famine and produced dearth. It showed in its exercise of patronage a total disregard for the interests of world-production. It crushed the most productive people, forgetting that production carried to the high level attained in Central Europe, can be the fruit only of generations of education, science and organization. It showered its favors on Poles and Rumanians and Jugo-Slavs, primitive unschooled races, not indeed without their own charm and emotional genius, who never, even after generations of experience, are likely to replace the Germans as industrial or intellectual workers. The mature and fertile civilization has been depressed and rendered unproductive.

The reader may grant, perhaps, that this rough statement answers to the facts. A combination of circumstances, the war itself, its undue prolongation, the inevitable working of the blockade, the natural prejudice against the violent Russian revolution, the personal failings of statesmen, the passive emotional exaltation of war-time—all these things have deflected us in many large matters from the path which cool reason would have dictated, but why blame the capitalist system? It is always easy to dwell on the accidents of history until the meaning of its processes is obscured. If the Kaiser's romantic vanity had been proof against the promptings of his military clique, or if the Tsar had had the intelligence to deal with those generals who on their own confession "lied" to him about the Russian general mobilization, we might have escaped the war. If Mr. Lloyd George could have resisted the temptation to make a khaki election, or if Mr. Wilson had been less of a moralist and more of an economist, we might have had a tolerable peace. On a broad view, however, can anyone doubt that the war itself was a crisis conditioned, nay created, by the whole course of our capitalistic development. These vast modern industries, whether in Lancashire or Westphalia, produced year by year their immense surplus of profits. This rapidly accumulated capital was exported every year to primitive countries, where labor is cheap, factory laws nonexistent and native governments weak, pliable and corruptible. Behind this exportation, bargaining to secure for each national group the opportunities which it coveted abroad in concessions, loans, and monopolized spheres of economic interest, stood the Great Powers. They strove by their unending competition in armaments, each to make a balance of power favorable to itself. For what was power desired? Power meant the ability to secure footholds over-seas, where there are railways to build, coolies to exploit, and raw materials to develop. In a world that lives and trades and thinks within the capitalist system, every war will be a capitalist war. One may dispute over its immediate occasion, assess the personal responsibilities, refine upon the idealistic aims which the doubting, horrified, war-weary nations were taught to entertain, and did in our case unquestionably cherish with entire sincerity in the earlier years of the war. The fact remains, that every big war is primarily a test of strength, in which the world's balance of power is adjusted for years or decades to come. If you would judge the true character of a man, watch him when fortune has put power into his hands. If you would measure the morals of a society, scrutinize it in the moment of conscious omnipotence. If you would know what a war was about, study the terms of peace.

We know more or less what sort of terms the enemy would have imposed had he won the war. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a specimen. The proposals to take in whole or part the mineral resources of Belgium and northern France shed a ray of light upon motives to which none of us was blind. The hand and brain of this German capitalist society worked with a certain brutal frankness. Turn to the Treaty of Versailles and its sequels, and the same thinking, half strategic, half economic, is no less legible. Here coal-fields, there oil-fields, elsewhere great tropical estates are appropriated: whole chapters rob the industry of the vanquished of its tools, its ships, its raw materials, its iron, its coal; other chapters stamp out the agencies and the rights on which its foreign trade had depended: the "penetration" of German capital outside German territory is ended once for all, and the "penetration" of Allied capital imposed, organized and legalized in its place. A responsible Liberal minister blurted out in Parliament, midway in the war, the truth that our war-aim was that German trade should never again "raise its head." That intention is written all over these treaties. The capitalistic motive was revealed not merely in the fact that in trade and territory we took much for ourselves. It was revealed even more clearly in the elaborate measures which we adopted to ruin our chief competitor.

We have now come to the kernel of our problem. We started by asking whether capitalism could con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tinue to produce the necessary goods on a scale adequate to ensure modest comfort to dense populations. We have seen that under the pressure of the competitive motive, the victorious Allies lamed if they did not quite ruin the productive capacity of Central Europe. Is there really any anomaly in such a phenomenon? There is none. The aim of capitalist industry is not maximum production, but maximum profit. Sometimes the two may coincide. Often they clash. Brazil, for example, has an organized system, regulated by law, by which part of the coffee crop is destroyed every year, if it exceeds a fixed level, in order to prevent a fall in prices. The logic of tariffs is based on the same reasoning. Capitalism does not aim primarily at the abundance of cheap goods. It aims at high profits and great accumulations. A shortage may even serve better than plenty, and its history is full of cases in which trusts and rings have organized a shortage and thriven on it. When the Allies ruined or at least paralyzed German industry, they were acting in the spirit of such a ring. For a time, and for limited groups of capitalist producers, these tactics may mean immeasurable gains. To the whole body of consumers in the world, and even to the consumers in Allied countries, this policy was treason. It was an irrational, uneconomic policy from the standpoint of the general good. It is intelligible only on the assumption that on the whole and subject to many checks and concessions, the trade policy of a capitalist state is based, not on the general good, but on the interest of the ruling capitalist class. Never in the world's history has the demonstration of this devastating suspicion been carried through on so vast a scale. Never before has the shortage of goods, produced by deliberate political sabotage, confronted us with the question "Can capitalism continue to supply the world's needs?"

It is no passing phase that we are considering. The world did indeed know in the middle years of the last century a phase of capitalism which was comparatively free from these evils. The Manchester School sought peace, and combated the belief that the ruin of its neighbors is of advantage to a nation. It was the fated march of economic imperialism in all countries which led us to this war and this peace. It was an inevitable development of the capitalist system, and it brings with it its shadow, militarism. In this peace they have perpetuated themselves. On this basis we can never escape the dominion of force. Those whom we have wronged will scheme how to use force against us. We shall never dare to allow Germany to recover her industrial prosperity, because she would infallibly use it, sooner or later, to disrupt our system of fetters and handicaps, to rewrite these treaties, to shatter our ascendancy. We may, under stress of the dire need of bread, patch up a commercial truce with Russia, but here again the resentments and still more the fears which must endure, while we possess the balance of force, and use it ruthlessly for the economic advantage of our capitalist class, will forbid Russia also from acquiescence in our system for the government of the world. In this condition of danger, wrong, resentment and fear, the world cannot evolve a system which should aim at maximum production and general prosperity. Capitalism has no such principle of solidarity and fraternity.

The future is dark. We can see that the continued pursuit of policies which are inimical to creation, to production, to life itself, may in the end down the capitalist system. It does not follow that an alternative system is either theoretically possible or capable of realizing itself. The evolutionary strategy of British guild socialism offers its high hopes, but years and decades must pass before it could so completely replace capitalist industry, as to transform the motives and aims of our international policy. The revolutionary strategy of Russian communism leads in its first struggles to shock, disorganization, the decline of production and the lowering of standards. The hostility of the capitalist world has seen to it that this gigantic social experiment shall not be tested under favorable conditions. Whether it could, whether it will, succeed by its own principles of cooperative production for use and not for profit, in vying with capitalistic production, remains as yet a theoretical possibility and nothing more. The fact that confronts us is world shortage, the dwindling of populations, the decay of industries, the twilight of civilizations.

H. N. Brailsford.

Our Summer Boarding House

SUMMER boarding houses are divided into two classes—those that take old maids and those that take small boys. Summer boarding houses that take old maids can be recognized at a glance by their gift-shop furnishings of refinished mahogany and pewter and brass, their minute pats of butter served on imitation willow pattern dishes, and their unreal and obtrusive cleanliness. Whether in town or country they are all run by what an age that would pretend to be shocked by modern frankness called Decayed Gentlewomen, and it is the D. G.'s that form their clientele. Avoid them!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our summer boarding house is of the family type that takes small boys. The house itself is large and square and is crowned with a cupola which proclaims its shame to the world (it was built out of Civil War profits in an evil day); and it stands on a New England hillside that was deforested before 1812, overlooking the narrow valley of the busy, nasty Wopetuk. It is not old enough to be "quaint," and its gingerbread porches counteract whatever dignity it might have without them; but it is painted the traditional white with green blinds, and its exterior is ameliorated by a row of ancient sugar maples, from which only two out of seven are gone.

Inside not so much can be said for it. The original mantels were replaced by "quartered oak" (probably about the time of the Chicago World's Fair, the chief event for its owners from the death of Lincoln to the Great War), and the furniture vacillates between well worn black walnut and contemporary department-store birch with white iron beds. If the proprietors possess any gift-shop antiques—brass knockers, or pewter plates, or old prints—they keep them hidden. The chances are that they sold them long ago at Yankee prices to admiring guests. At any rate the parlor mantel is now decorated with such objets d'art as imitation cut glass vases and a brass clock, with a steel face, that doesn't go. The one obvious heirloom in the place is a mahogany desk bookcase, the glass doors of which are lined with heavy green cloth to discourage the light and the too curious eye.

New arrivals are seldom impressed by either the cleanness or the order of our boarding house. But where there are such constant invasions of small boys fresh from admiration of the pigs or the calves, from haymow and barnyard, the proprietors can hardly be blamed for not worrying too much about stair-carpets and bathroom floors. And why bother about flies in the kitchen when anyone can see that there are more on the sticky "fly-paper" than on the food?

Despite these disabilities our house draws more people than it can accommodate even when full use is made of innumerable extra "cots." The reasons are four: (1) pies are its specialty; (2) children are welcome; (3) the place is accessible from various factory towns by good automobile roads; (4) as compared with the number of flies there are few mosquitoes.

Our fellow boarders belong to the happy bourgeoisie, who frankly prefer blueberry pie to the most elaborate Waldorf mousse, and who like to have their children about them even when they are away from home. They are content with life because it has given them its two best boons—children and automobiles. Most of them are youngish couples—not over forty—who make no bones of having risen in the world. The men did not go to college but went into business. Consequently at twenty-five, instead of being professional neophytes, working for their keep, they could afford to marry—and the results are irrepressible today. At forty they can afford Packards. After all, why kick?

Not that they are "big business" men. They refer to Judge Gary and the Guaranty Trust Company with as much class-consciousness as English butlers display in speaking of the Duke of Devonshire or Windsor Castle. Theirs is the easy complacency of the small manufacturer. And now that the War is over they don't intend to worry again as long as they live. Celtic-American yacht races and Franco-American tennis matches are the only forms of internationalism that appeal to them. Ireland? Russia? the Near East? Take them all away—they are not our funeral.

During our three weeks' holiday, at any rate, we refuse to be disturbed by the big world (which is getting too big for comfort, if the truth were known); though to do us justice we always buy a newspaper when we go to the village and read the headlines of the Presidential campaign. We are openly patronizing in our attitude toward both candidates. "Oh, of course, I'll vote for Harding," says my next neighbor at table when asked point-blank. "He's no ball of fire—everybody knows that—but he's all right. So's Cox for that matter. I've got nothing against him personally. And if you ask me I'll say that the best two out of the four of 'em are at the tail of the tickets. I was for General Wood—he's a man—too big a man for 'em, I guess. But the main thing was to get as far as they could from Wilson—no more of that highbrow stuff—idealism they used to call it. . . . Oh, yes, Harding 'll make a good President because he'll pick a good cabinet—Wood for Secretary of War. He can have my vote."

Our crowd is almost as homogeneous in its morals as in its politics. Let no one approach our boarding house in the pleasant expectation that he is going to épater the bourgeoisie by showing them cheek-to-cheek or intra-knee dancing, or by telling them anything about cocktails. But I warn any representative of the gentler sex against thinking that she can with impunity pull out a cigarette when the cigars are being lit after supper. As one of the men put it the other night when the subject of women's smoking was brought up: "I like to see my wife spark up a bit with a cocktail, but, my God, if I ever caught her with a cigarette in her mouth, I'd fix her." It may be permitted in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the larger centres, but it simply isn't done (openly) in Brassville, Connecticut, or Fenmarsh, New Jersey.

The word "sex" is never used in our boarding house, but such subjects as Salt Lake City never fail to "start something." The gray-haired mother of a family of married daughters told me the other day, sotto voce, that last winter when she stopped there on her way to California she had cold shivers up and down her spine all the time she was in the Mormon capital, the men had such a "polygamous look"; and she refused to stay for the recital at the Temple when she found that the doors were locked during the program. The same gray-haired mother told as a joke the other night a story about a naval officer which turned upon a pun that could not be printed.

Reading in our boarding house is almost entirely a matter of sex. No one in trousers would be seen with a book in his hand, though the Saturday Evening Post and some of the snappy story magazines are not considered unmanly. There are very few novels in the house of a later vintage than Janice Meredith—which a bored schoolgirl trots out occasionally on a hopelessly rainy day. But some of the ladies have brought more recent fiction with them. One rotund and daring dentist's wife produced Jurgen, but no one so far has been able to "get into it" in spite of the fact that it has been suppressed. The longest discussions have centred around The Romantic Woman, which might well be used as the touchstone of our social philosophy. Mrs. A. and Miss B., our ultra-conservatives, think it should never have been printed (though both read it intently from cover to cover). The large moderate group is tolerant, though their tolerance is expressed in this somewhat negative praise—"It is about as far as you can go." While one young radical who has not been married long enough to have had a baby, and therefore in our view can know nothing about the "world," has had the effrontery to declare that "it was a good thing to do and jolly well done." She was, however, suspect anyway, for she said something rather caustic about the dancing last Saturday night of some of our fellow boarders who had been off for dinner at the Turkey Red Teahouse.

The favorite sport of our crowd is undeniably roadhousing. This recreation is not dependent on the weather, and it has endless variety. There are several reasons why our people do not spend their vacations at expensive hotels as they could well afford to do. One is that the men do not like to dress for dinner. Another is that they prefer to pay less for everyday living and have more left to blow in on trips to roadhouses (within convenient reach by good automobile roads) which are famous for their dinners a hundred miles around.

The roadhouse is to the well-to-do couple in the country boarding house what the movie is to the remote villager—an unfailing resource. Nor does the pleasure end with the end of the $5.00 feast and the ride home. There is the fun forever after of comparing the chickens at the Gray Goose and the White Duck, the waffles at the Fairington Inn and the Brookside Tavern. There is the pleasure of being in the secret of the places where you can still "get it," and the rising sense of superiority that comes when you discover a person who has not as yet tasted the raspberry flapjacks at the Speckled Guineapig.

But after all these alarums and excursions, our boarding house is a comfortable place to return to—where a man can take off his coat and smoke his pipe on the porch with no apology, and a woman can go marcelled or not as she pleases, and no one says "don't" even when the small boys take the spindles from the bannisters to beat the pigs with. It comes as near to a bourgeois Utopia as a summer hotel need come—for there is no Bolshevism here—the maids read nothing more seditious than Gimbel's catalogue,—and the pies never fail.

A Boarder.

Lost—A Soul

Somewhere in all this confusing
Tangle of objects,
Among these possessions
I have strained and sweated
All my best years
To gather about me—
Somewhere among the crowding ornaments,
Furniture, rugs, brocades,
Cut-glass and silver-plate,
Is the soul I have lost.

In my youth of privation and struggle
It used to brighten
My bare little room.
It wore a shining garment of dream,
A filet of golden fancies
Bound its brow,
Its eyes held visions. . . .

If anyone chance to see a soul
Grown somewhat fat and sluggish
And careless in attire,
Hugging itself and gloating
In some richly upholstered chair,
Or counting the silver spoons,
It is mine.—I would have it back
For one needs a soul
If only to keep up appearances.

Anna Spencer Twitchell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

More Brains, Good Lord

PRACTICALLY the United States government has accepted French diplomacy. Whatever its reservations about methods, it is lined up in influence against Lloyd George, against British Labor, against Asquith, Grey, Cecil and Smuts. It is against the England of the Manchester Guardian, the Nation, the New Statesman, of Brailsford, Angell and Russell. It is against the Russia of Kropotkin, Brusilov and Gorki, of the best of the intellectuals and the best of the aristocracy. It is against the leaders of the vast cooperative associations who, rising above natural pique at their Bolshevik oppressors, have pleaded for free intercourse as the only road to health. Our government is willing to continue the blockade of goods and news in the service of a Russia composed of Mr. Bakhmetev and a handful of expatriates who have never been able to get together on anything except the merits of Kolchak. If by this momentous error our government does not help the world to another war, in which the western nations of Europe will be completely exhausted, it will be because we are kept from the fruits of our mistake by the genius of Lloyd George and the determination of Labor and Liberalism in Great Britain.

It is an unhappy subject to talk about for one who believes ardently in the League of Nations and in the world influence of this administration, and yet it would be worse to remain silent. The harm done by a mere essay like Mr. Colby's statement is far-reaching enough, because it upholds in its effect a deadly Holy Alliance policy in Europe. But that is not all. We allege that we are not enforcing a blockade, but we are enforcing what ordinary people call a blockade. It is a strange respect for words that we should fear to say so openly. As long as we systematically refuse export licenses for what Russia most needs, passports, mail communications and banking facilities, it is merely making sounds to say we are not conducting an embargo against Russia. Mr. Harding has neither courage nor intelligence. If he had he would know how to put the administration in such a position on this, the most urgent issue in the world, that it would have to go promptly over to the liberal side or be kept on a continual defensive, fatal to success in November.

Who believed that even France could, after all that has happened, accomplish anything so monumentally perverse as the recognition of Wrangel? Yet, after all, France knows what she wants better than we know what we want. If she is still further training Russia to militarism by throwing one remaining effort, after the long list from the Czecho-Slovaks to the Poles, she has the excuse that her government is squarely a believer in force and in no other safety. What does our government believe? Many of us had supposed it believed these words of Lloyd George, delivered the same day as Mr. Colby's statement of our policy:

> I say now that if they want peace they can get it. The London conference proposal was intended to establish peace with Sovietism. We are prepared to fight with the same weapons as we fight other political creeds with which we do not agree. In the end one or the other will triumph, or something else emerge better suited to conditions of the time. If anyone here wants to preach the doctrines of Sovietism we can meet them, I trust, in the common sense of the people of this country. Peace is essential for all creeds that are worth preserving.

The man who spoke those words is not a theorist. He realizes to the full how dependent statesmen are on wind and tide and, for all I know, even before these words are in print, the errors of France, America, Poland and Russia combined, may have forced him into war. But he is a many-sided, fighting genius, and when he spoke that truth about peace and the creeds, he spoke with the insight that so often flames in him. He is the most competent of pilots in a stormy sea and England continues to employ him, not for his character but for his brains. If in the end our government is guilty of helping to bring about a second world-war it will not be for lack of conviction or good intention. It will be because legalism and moralism are of small value in so large a crisis. Intelligence is needed, political genius, and the realization that you cannot put down either Lenin or the Third International by war, open or disguised, but only by skill and courage in peace.

Is not that truth that our government above all others might have been expected to comprehend? If I said, or the New Republic said, that Bolshevism flourishes on suppression, confusion and prostration, and can only be changed into harmless opposition by prosperity, well guided, that theory might be rejected because the New Republic and I are freaks. Even Fox and Romilly, Jefferson, Webster and Lincoln, and the many eloquent defenses of tolerating error delivered by the liberal leaders of all lands might be rejected as be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

longing only in history books and having no application when we are alarmed ourselves, but when we see the shrewdest practical politician in the world trying to lead toward the cure by contact, away from the quackery of cure by open or veiled force, it is indeed strange to find our government opposing him. When the only successful liberal party existing at present in any large country in this blind world, the British Labor party, is working to orient us after our six year debauch, it must seem strange to these men, carrying the torch of British freedom and intellectual courage, to see in America the administration of one party trying to apply Palmerism to Russia while it blames (and in my opinion, rightly blames) the other party for keeping us out of the League of Nations. For a person like me, believing in the League as the necessary, although imperfect, beginning of regular international cooperation, and at the same time believing the Russian question the preeminent test of the ability of those holding power in free countries to think freely, there can be only one consolation in a reversion like Mr. Colby's to the mood of the Holy Alliance,—a faint, ironic consolation, —that it matters less than I thought it did what happens in November. It is one of the saddest disillusions of my life to see my country thus committed, away from British trust in reason and natural recovery, off toward trust in force, isolation, interference; away from free investigation, off toward official assertions about Bolshevik sin, while independent investigation is forbidden.

Let us look for a moment at Mr. Colby's arguments, leaving out his mere summarizing, which somehow recalls much of the language of witchcraft days. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," says the Good Book. Apart from this mediaeval moral talk, which we need not take space to answer, since we no longer believe in curing witchcraft by severe punishment, what are the arguments presented for the terrible conclusion that we will not "participate in any plan for expansion of the armistice negotiations into a general European Conference?" It is the argument against dismemberment. We have been by no means against dismemberment of Austria, Turkey, Bulgaria or East Prussia. We are only against the voluntary separation of parts of the Tsar's former empire. We are against peace between Esthonia and Soviet Russia, Latvia and Soviet Russia, Lithuania and Soviet Russia. There must be no evolution, no peace, with such coming together in the future, as may voluntarily occur. The Tsar's empire must remain intact and holy. Indeed, an extraordinary detail is that Mr. Colby's words, "restored, free and united Russia," are the words of the Kolchak and Denikin press. The most important role among these three words has been played by "restored."

Mr. Colby makes the statement that the people of Russia were "in no wise responsible" for the peace of Brest-Litovsk. By so many years of propaganda we propagandize ourselves. It was just a few devils called Bolsheviks who made peace. Kerensky's frantic warnings that Russia's collapse was inevitable are forgotten. The millions of deserters from the army are forgotten. There is no realization that the Russian peasant had endured just about enough of bloody patriotism.

A true charge is that the government is not representative. It is indeed certain that the Bolsheviks are non-representative. It is probable that the government that succeeds them will not be representative, or the government after that. It may be long before any government will be representative of a country containing 80 to 85 percent of peasants whose only political ideas are that the land belongs to them and that they distrust those who seek to "restore" Russia. Lenin is not representative. He is not, however, as unrepresentative as M. Bakhmetev. Are we expected to draw no conclusions at all about what happened to Kornilov, Kaledin, Alexeyev, Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and Pilsudski? What kept these highly representative exponents of democracy from controlling Moscow and getting together a set of Russian individuals from Paris and Washington to form a government? There is no need for forgetting that both Kolchak and Denikin planned a "temporary" dictatorship. For one, I am willing to grant, for argument's sake, that it might be a better world if all the king's horses and all the king's men were able to restore Humpty Dumpty to his original shell. It might be a better world if M. Millerand, Mr. Colby and M. Bakhmetev could fix up Russia to suit themselves. The desperate fact is that they cannot, and the question is how much longer they shall be allowed to kill trade, prevent the upbuilding of Germany, Austria and Russia, block us off from first-hand information, and feed us on propaganda, in the attempt to enforce their ideas of another country's proper line of evolution.

The strongest part of the American position is that the Bolshevik government and the Third International are one. It is true, this charge, and it is true also that the Bolshevik government cannot complain of its treatment by the bourgeois governments, since it is in reality committed to seek their violent overthrow. But I am not concerned about the case of the Bolshevik government. I conceive that it has no case. I am concerned, not with debating points, morals, honor or loyalty, but with consequences. It is a vast division in intelli-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gence that confronts us. The governments of France and the United States assume that using the governmental machinery to throw bombs, blockades or essays at the Bolshevik government is the promising road to salvation. I assert, as British liberalism and labor assert, that the only road to salvation is such a resumption of trade relations and intercourse as will help the exchange of commodities, facts and ideas. No crisis could put a heavier responsibility on the few Americans—very few, apparently—who believe in freedom, than is put by the plunge of our government into an enterprise so dire, so false to our heritage, so typical of the errors of power in times of stress. I am not the right person to take a leading part, because my controversies about Russia have been too intense, but there are men, plenty of them, who ought to organize at once, so as to make their pressure felt on both candidates before the election, determined that if we are to commit ourselves to force, disguised as morality, it shall be done in the open, with all its consequences clear, with the responsibility fixed. This issue is more important than domestic issues, because domestic errors can be undone in four years. It is more important than the League of Nations issue, because unless we can solve this question the League is a menace and a fraud. This issue is paramount, and it will not wait.

NORMAN HAPGOOD.

Modernism In Siena

MY Italian professor is one of the most modern men in Siena. He is a priest, between forty and fifty years old, with gray hair, strong white teeth, and a body as powerful as a boxer's. He is not only modern, but modern to such a degree that he is pointed out darkly by many people in Siena as a menace. And everyone there knows that moderno is his favorite word.

This modernity of Don Paolo's—we will call him Paolo—is not a mere recent thing. It was not stirred up by the upheaval of the war. He began long ago by establishing a recreation home for boys in Siena. His idea was primarily to keep the boys off the street, and to give them an education in athletics, bathing, and the other interests usually regarded as Boy Scout activities in England and America. He got hold of an old house in his parish, turned the garden into a playground, put in a swimming-pool, tennis courts, and even built a printing press and a little theatre. The boys learned to write and act their own plays and to issue under their own pens a little weekly journal. The money for this he got partly by giving lessons in Italian to foreigners and partly from English residents and their friends at home, who were interested in the benefits of such an enterprise for Siena.

On this experiment Siena was very much divided. Many citizens were scandalized. There were many people who said that the archbishop should curb these wild ideas in one of his clergy. It took boys away from home. It sinned against the family. It attempted to destroy the influence of their parents over them. It was irreligious. Nevertheless the experiment suceeded. And every day it is more secure; for Father Paolo's boys are growing up and have become citizens of Siena to defend him. There is a tablet in his garden of those who fell in the war.

Father Paolo is a power in politics. He is something of a leader in the Partito Popolare. He has even had conferences with the Holy Father in the Vatican, who has counselled prudence. He believes that the land ought to come back to the contadini who work it. He does not believe that it should be confiscated by the state and turned over to the contadini, that would be socialism or something wrong; he thinks that an arrangement should be made by which in the course of time they could buy it with their labors, instead of the present hopeless system by which the landlords have hold over everything. Not only that, but they are sitting back and letting an immense exodus go from the land to the towns and into the industries, and so ruining the one hope of Italy, which is that the country be made self-supporting as far as food goes. Don Paolo would not advocate the same scheme for church properties, however. They belong to no private individual and are not administered for private good, and they should be left where they will be most useful.

Don Paolo believes too in women's rights. He was carried away with delight last spring when the suffrage was given to women. And he celebrated the event in his paper when the law was passed giving married women property rights.

"It is medieval, absurdly medieval," he had long said, "that in Italy a married woman could not draw a check, could not go to the bank in her own name."

And he always declared it equally medieval that Italian women were legally liable to be locked out if they stayed abroad longer than the time granted them by their husbands. What an outrage on civilization!

He even went so far as to say that women had a right to smoke in the cafés, as they are doing since the war. Was there not the old countess in the Via Ricasoli who for years had put on her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

furs and leaned out of her palace window smoking a cigar as she watched the crowds pass? Why this special privilege merely because she was of a great family? And why should the Sienese hate the Florentines as they do? After all it is four hundred years and more since they fought each other. Half of Siena thinks Don Paolo disloyal for that sentiment about Florence.

And in the housing agitation in Siena since the war, Don Paolo has been a firebrand.

"It is an outrage and a disgrace to civilization," he thundered and would thunder whenever the subject came up, "that these great palaces in Siena should be vacant when there are so many poor people without a place to lay their heads." He knew poor families with ten people sleeping in a room.

Of course we all know the misfortunes of Siena, he said, since the houses, for a mile along the east wall especially, had all fallen down after the great plague of 1348. But still, look at the Saracini Palace. A hundred rooms in extent and nobody there but the caretaker, unless Conte Borghese chose to give a concert in the Music Salon. There were men in Siena who owned three or four palaces besides villas in the country. And look there opposite the post-office, at the great palace whose owner will allow nobody to live in it since her son's death; it stands there furnished from top to bottom and vacant. No wonder, we are on the edge of a revolution all the time.

All these ideas Don Paolo speaks of and makes orations about. And he defies the conservatives in Siena, who would like to have him sent off to a retreat in the North, if the archbishop would only do as most people think he would like to do with this Bolshevik.

And Don Paolo edits a weekly paper which is read at the Socialists Club and by every sort of wild revolutionary. And young hot heads all over town quote his editorials.

Don Paolo told me that he had not believed in the war. "I am a modern," he said with his eyes blazing, "and war is antiquated. It is mediaeval, a mediaeval encumbrance on modern civilization."

We used to sit and talk about these matters during our lesson period. Was there going to be a revolution in Italy? Don Paolo thought not. The Italians had too much common sense, besides, they were too indifferent to principles carried into action. As for the war, Italy had been badgered into it. She was between two fires. She had won the war and lost everything, as everybody in Italy was saying. Often the whole hour passed with the place resounding under his great voice. I had no objection. His flow of faultless Tuscan was better for me than any grammar exercises.

One morning after Easter I decided to vary from the socialists and revolutions and turn the talk on a special point in dogma. Don Paolo would give me the explanation in contemporaneous terms.

I had been seeing everywhere in Siena over the church doors the Indulgenza Plenaria. It seemed a difficult doctrine to reconcile with our modern thinking. I asked Don Paolo to explain, then, the idea of Plenary Indulgence, what it means to a man like him, for I know of course, as I told him, the general doctrine.

He would be delighted to tell me, he said.

There are some sins, of course, he said, that are easily forgiven. If a man truly repents he can expiate them in this life. Or in a few years in purgatory. But there were some sins which Almighty God could not forgive without a profound expiation on the sinner's part. Say for instance a man committed a sin for which he would be given say 300,000 years in purgatory, that is, before his soul could be cleansed from it. And seeing the difficulty of this the Church had established a method by which the sinner could expiate at least a portion of this great sin here in this world. Some penance he could do, like a pilgrimage or much prayer or noble work. Or it might be more possible or convenient for many men to give money by way of expiation. A man might build a hospital or help the poor or make a foundation of some sacred kind, or give money to the church. Or he might contribute to the support of some order like that at Certosa, each member of which community lived alone in his cell, had his own garden, his food passed in to him, and never spoke except for one meal a week at which all the brothers sat together. These orders represented a living sacrifice for the sins of men. By paying in this way a sinner could at least avoid such a long punishment and perhaps have only 50,000 years to serve in purgatory instead of 400,000. We must, you see, have every means we can invent to fight the power of the devil.

"Ah, yes," I said, seeing our plight and trying to escape. "And must one believe in the devil exactly?" I asked. "Or may I think of him, of it as a state in which for the time our less good qualities are in the majority?"

"Not at all, oh, no," he said, with the same look in his eye as when he taked about the landlords in Siena. "He is a being. The devil is a fallen angel. He is an evil spirit. The devil is God's opponent. We must fight him."

STARK YOUNG.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How Reaction Helps

IS freedom possible only in periods of transition from one economic era to another? Does it flourish only because of the relaxation of old economic ties and endure only as long as the new economic regime is not consolidated? Was the democratic movement, the liberal movement — or whatever name it should go by — not a general and inherently steady development but merely a temporary episode attending the shifting of control from agrarian feudalism to privileged capitalism?

Five years ago such questions seemed absurd to the vast majority of people, especially to middle class people. Today these same questions, though of course in a much less abstract form, are entertained by a steadily increasing number of these same people. The thinking among them have always recognized in a way that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. But they thought this vigilance should be exercised in keeping the ways open, in preventing and removing the obstacles by which losing interests strove to slow down on moving progress. Today they are asking whether the vigilance that secures freedom must not be exercised in altering the conditions which determine the direction of social forces. They are solicitous not about obstructions to democratic progress but about its foundations.

Consideration of the growing change of temper will throw some light on the question of the relation of reactionaryism to social progress. There is a general belief, supposedly justified by history, that in the long run every exhibition of reactionary conservatism (such as we have experienced in America since the 11th of November 1919) ends by strengthening the cause of progress. But the means by which the reactionary helps do not seem to have received analysis. If the technique of the process were known possibly it would cease to be true that nothing is ever learned from history. Certainly it is not instructive to say that a social movement to one extreme always ends by calling out a swing of the pendulum in the other direction, that there are radical as well as conservative reactions. The question is one of specific fact. How does the reactionary release progressive forces?

The question can be answered only by careful historic study guided by knowledge of human psychology. But a hypothesis may be ventured. The reactionary helps by clarifying the issue, by revealing obscure facts, uncovering hidden forces. History itself gives the lie to the idea that oppression by itself arouses an effective love of liberty. The worst thing about any form of enslavement is that it tends to make the oppressed content in their enslavement. It dulls perception of the possibility of another state of affairs and it destroys the energy which is required to effect change. To apply to the relation of oppression and freedom in politics the physical law of equal action and reaction is to delude ourselves with foolish magical formulae. Reactionarism helps only when it awakens men's minds, only when it makes them see things they didn't see before, only when it focusses attention. The cause of the reactionary depends upon the immense inertia of human stupidity. But the stupidity of the reactionary is that at critical junctures he strives to entrench himself by doing things which force attention to facts that he has every interest in keeping concealed; by doing things which crystalize forces that work in his behalf only as long as they remain diffused and obscure.

The madness with which the gods afflict those whom they would destroy is precisely the temptation to use a temporary possession of strategic power so as to make that power permanent. In this effort they necessarily exaggerate evils that had existed previously but that were tolerated in part because they were not perceptible and in part because they had not as yet become intolerable. The excess, the exaggeration, makes the evil obvious, conspicuous, and it adds force to old and neglected criticism by leading men to believe that the evil had always been there in the same intense form which it assumes under the exaggeration of the moment.

The terms of the peace settlement, for example, are such as to emphasize the desire of Great Britain to obtain a monopoly of oil, and of France to keep Germany in permanent industrial subjection. Such things lie so obviously upon the surface as to convince multitudes of what they never had believed — that the main if not the sole cause of the war was greed for economic supremacy, and that most of the talk about justice and self-determination was bunk. The multitude is in no condition to discriminate. It does not reflect that the outcome of the war exaggerated the significance of certain economic factors, and put a few men in a position where they could make an excessive unrelieved assertion of this exaggeration. The outcome is read back into the antecedent state of things, and it is concluded that these forces were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

working in the same intensified fashion all the time.

They were indeed working and working powerfully. But it was a condition of their continued working that they should not be intense and concentrated, but diffused and thus bound up with many genuinely idealistic factors. Their exaggeration condenses, concentrates, crystalizes them, and in so doing strips them bare of all the humane associations which were indispensable to their smooth working. At the same time millions are induced to believe the worst that radical extremists had ever said about the economic determination of society. The reactionary, not the socialistic critic, has supplied the object lesson in the alliance of politics with privileged control of land and its natural resources.

Another way in which the reactionary helps is by the advertising he gratuitously gives radicalism. This enables us to understand why terms given in objurgation and scorn become the honored names of parties and movements. It is not the fault of American reactionaries that an actual Bolshevism has not been created by them. If conditions had been at all propitious the myth of the extraordinary power and unceasing activity of extreme Reds would have ended in a fact. Where there is such fear, it is only proper that there should be something to be afraid of. As it is, the effort to render everything that departs from laudatory acceptance of existing capitalism into a dangerous and sinister radicalicm can only terminate in making radicalism respectable and honorable. Men of honesty and spirit who are at all dissatisfied with the existing regime will be ashamed of calling themselves anything else. Already there are signs that liberalism will be eschewed as a milk and water term. At the close of every vehement reactionary movement in history, the commonplaces of thought and discussion which form the plane of action have moved to the left. Vice is not the only thing that becomes tolerable through familiarity. If the reactionary were wise he would show confidence in his strength by leaving the ideas he dislikes in a region of vague and unmentionable mystery. Too much ghost talk creates a desire to see ghosts, until finally the men are willing to pay good money to see the spirits which had once been the source of panicky terrors.

The reactionary also serves by forcing the radical to abandon the cloudland of dreams and come to closer grip with realities. As long as "scientific" socialism lived upon the revolutionary formulae of '48 it was either 75 years behind or ahead of the times. It certainly was not in touch with them in America. But when the Hessians of reactionary capitalism discovered these rhetorical flourishes and took them seriously enough to send men to jail for indulging in them, it was a signal that it was no longer necessary to take refuge in millennial dreams. The current facts of particular economic transformation were substituted for prophetic hopes of a universal transformation. Dream psychology is always evidence of impotence. But the dreamer who is prodded into wakefulness faces the facts that enter into action.

For the violence of the reactionary shows prescience of actual tendencies. It reveals the movement of actual forces. As long as socialism accepted the Marxian doctrine of a sudden revolution which was to be the result of the universal misery, poverty and weakness of the laborer, it was practically negligible. Every such doctrine expresses a compensatory psychology. It is the proof of weakness. Any real "revolution" will proceed from strength, from increased strength of capacity and position. The war gave labor precisely this access of strength. Yet it might, in the United States at least, have remained largely unconscious and unconcentrated, ready to be dissipated with the inevitable oncoming of hard times and unemployment, if the reactionary had not forced its recognition. His irrational violence of fear revealed the strength that was there. Labor can never entirely forget the instruction it has received as to its potential power. It is the reactionary who has turned prophet, and his prophecy is based on a frightened perception of the actual movement of forces. Thus he helps. He spreads enlightenment by his endeavors to establish obscurantism. There is just one passing period in which he succeeds. There is a stage of development in which a vague and mysterious feeling of uncertain terror seizes the populace. During this time the reactionary has things all his own way. Deceived by this success, his movements become noisy; his intentions obvious. He attracts attention away from the terror to himself. The twilight clears and objects are again seen in their natural proportions. Discussion and free speech are suppressed. But the means taken to suppress them become more enlightening than normal discussion and free speech would have been. Timid souls have been cowed into a permanent acquiescence; but they never counted anyway except as a passive weight. Suppression of truth and circulation of lies permanently twisted some facts. But the loss as far as progress is concerned is more than made up for by the revelation of motives and objects through which the reactionary permanently weakened his power. Thus he helps.

JOHN DEWEY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The American Theatre

A History of the Theatre in America, From Its Beginnings to the Present Time, by Arthur Hornblow, 2 volumes, New York: J. B. Lippincott.

THE rather sensational auction sale last October of the books and pamphlets relating to the theatre, which had been accumulated by the late Evarts Wendell, was a surprise to many on account of the number of American plays included and the variety of books, several hundred in all, relating to the history of the American stage. General students of literature have known nothing about this field, because it is ignored in school and college curricula; and special enthusiasts of the stage and drama have been conscious of little except the earlier periods—Dunlap in genial error and Seilhamer in caustic correction—and the present, with its commingling of invective at the commercial theatre and its speculative hopefulness for a new stage, and drama, and playgoing public.

Of the general historians of American literature none but Moses Coit Tyler has paid any attention to playwright, actor or producer. There is no word about them in the substantial volumes by Richardson and Wendell, none in the ordinary run of textbooks, and not a mention of them even in the four-hundred and odd pages of Pattee's American Literature since 1870. Yet there is work for a lifetime on the American drama and the American theatre, and, either in the raw or half-refined, an immense amount of material available.

The appearance, therefore, of a compendious history on this subject is very much to the point; the first general survey has now been attempted; a modest observatory has been erected from which the intelligent sightseer can look out over the field; a beginning has been made. However, an observatory is perhaps too substantial for a faithful likeness to Mr. Hornblow's volumes; a captive balloon would be a better metaphor; for the captive balloon, I am told, has three kinds of motion,—pitching, spinning and rolling,—and is a profitable seat of observation only to the man with a steady nerve and a trained eye.

The work in hand is similarly blown about by various winds, so that one is never sure from chapter to chapter as to the altitude or angle from which he is looking down at the field. Nearly half the work is devoted to the history of events up to 1825. The period is full of interest, but it is after all like the formative period in the life of any author, and should be treated so, as to both emphasis and proportion. But the proportion throughout the work seems to have been determined largely by the abundance of material at hand. At one point Seilhamer presents a vast amount of documentation as to casts of early plays, and it is included; at another William B. Wood indulges in circumstantial reminiscence about the social bad manners of George Frederick Cooke, and three pages are devoted to one episode; at another the escapades of Lola Montez attract the historian's attention, and a page and a half are dedicated to her, of which only six lines have anything to do with her relation to the American theatre. Again, as the balloon has cavorted in mid-air the pilot has sacrificed accuracy to the need of clinging to the sides of the basket. For example, President Dwight of Yale did not declare anything about the stage in 1824 because he was then seven years dead; the poet Whittier's first name (one hates to quibble) was John, and not William; Dunlap's translation from Zschokke is spelled Abaellino; and the whole point of the Wilde title, The Importance of Being Ernest, lies in the proper spelling of the punning last word. Finally, as these latter items suggest, the work is deficient at points where publisher should share responsibility with author. Yet, as has already been said, the book is a pioneer work, and is entitled to the respect due its kind. First works in untrodden fields are seldom unqualifiedly successful.

Seen as a whole the history of the theatre in America presents a moving pageant of the most fascinating sort. It is the old story of the cultural history of America reconfirmed in these particular terms. The first unit tells the story of a slowly decreasing dependency on all things English. This involves the presentation of English plays by American amateurs in regular audience rooms with improvised stages; next the development of semi-professional and wholly professional companies who played short seasons at irregular intervals; next the erection of special playhouses; and, finally the formation of more permanent professional companies—both English and American—all of which took place in the course of two generations or more before the emergence of any American drama.

Throughout these developments a prevailing inhospitality to things theatrical had to be worn down. In New York and Philadelphia the indirections of the politicians combined with the head-on animosity; and, of course, the conquest of New England was a problem in itself. The early counsel of Samuel Sewall, that Boston colossus, pillar of the church and supporter of the law, had been sounded in 1714. The Council Chamber in Boston should not be used as a playhouse: "Christian Boston" should not "goe beyond Heathen Rome in the practice of Shameful Vanities." Evidently the counsel prevailed; yet old truepenny ghost of the drama would not meekly submit to banishment. The Massachusetts General Court showed that he was still active underground in 1750, by its act for "preventing and avoiding the many great mischiefs which arise from public stage plays, interludes, and other theatrical entertainments, which not only occasion great and unnecessary expenses, and discourage industry and frugality, but likewise tend generally to increase immorality, impiety and a contempt for religion." And while Massachusetts was, to use its own diction, getting its dander up, the ungodly Rhode Island, Puritan influenced, but not Puritan bound, in a temporary burst of worldliness, built a theatre, sanctioned professional players, and contributed to dramatic humor by inventing the long-used device of the "moral dialogue" subterfuge for eating its cakes and conserving its virtue too.

The Continental Congress war measure of 1774 was colonial rather than Puritan, but quaintly indicative of things dramatic with its classification of exhibitions of shows and plays with "horse-racing and all kinds of gaming [and] cock-fighting"; but the petition to the General Court in 1790 is to the point, as is the referendum vote of the next year, and the successful conclusion of the campaign in 1783.

The yoking of plays and cock-fighting does not seem quite so bizarre if one recalls the proprietary attitude of the public toward theatres and actors on both sides of the Atlantic in the good old days. Garrick pelted out of his theatre and pursued to his house for an unwelcome change of bill, the "Old Price" uproars let loose and continued for three months at Covent Garden Theatre, and the mad behavior of the London pits and galleries, gave ample precedents for high times in the American playhouses; and the precedents were followed. In 1800 Mrs. Byrne, ap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pearing as danseuse in Philadelphia, was greeted so warmly that she stayed off the boards for several nights and then returned with a revised and amplified costume. In 1811 in the same city, a Scotchman, McKenzie, broke his contract with the Chestnut Street Theatre, and his friends finished the job by bombarding the company when an attempt was made to present the play with a substitute in his place. In 1821 Edmund Kean affronted a Boston audience by leaving the stage because the receipts were too small, and four years later American resentment was so strong that on his return to this country his New York performance was a pantomime in Bedlam, and in Boston he was driven off the stage. Most sensational of all was the popular furore over the rival claims of the Englishman Macready and the American Forrest. This became an international matter, a perfect illustration of patriotism gone mad; and in the Astor Place riot of 1849 twenty-two persons lost their lives and thirty-six more were seriously wounded.

In the middle half of the nineteenth century the comparative poverty of American dramatic writing was offset by the brilliance of a succession of really great actors. "In quick succession the American stage was enriched by the terrifying acting of Edmund Kean, the delicious drollery of Charles Mathews, the extraordinary genius of Junius Brutus Booth, the natural comedy of James H. Hackett, the intellectual art of William Charles Macready, the tempestuous splendor of Edwin Forrest, the irresistible comedy of John Brougham and W. E. Burton, the delightful impersonations of Joseph Jefferson, the majesty and pathos of Charlotte Cushman, the humorous eccentricities of E. A. Sothern's "Dundreary," the noble presence and beautiful voice of Edwin Booth, the scholarly and versatile art of Edward L. Davenport, the nobility and charm of John McCullough, the distinction of Lawrence Barrett, the spontaneous humor of the versatile John Gilbert, the loveliness of Mary Anderson, the mournful beauty of Adelaide Neilson, the grace of Fanny Ellsler, and many other players of almost equal renown." If the sceptical modernist inclines to lift the eyebrow at such a list of names and characterizations, the relatively small list of plays which served these oldtime stars will give him pause. The backbone of it was Shakespeare; there was a high seriousness in the supplementary tragedies from Addison's Cato to Payne's Brutus and beyond; and the comedies,—largely eighteenth century English—were marked by distinction and grace. The great actors of that golden age were not content with cheap vehicles. Moreover, they mastered vast repertories, and continued in a variety of parts, the only notable exceptions, Jefferson and Sothern, creating character parts of extraordinary finish.

Naturally in those same days the vulgar play flourished too. Melodrama had its devotees, as always, and popular bills of the most lavish variety—two plays and interpolated features—drew large houses. And in those days it is well to remember, there arose to notoriety the most shamelessly sordid and the most triumphantly impudent of showmen, P. T. Barnum. It was he who managed the $700,000 tour of Jennie Lind, and converted Charles S. Stratton into the world-famed Tom Thumb; and it was he who set up as an adjunct to his Museum the Moral Lecture Room, with a conservatism that he could readily simulate for the dollars it might bring him, and started on notable careers many actors in the successful presentation of "continuous performance" programs.

For the welfare of the American stage, and an antidote to Barnumism, a factor of equal value with the great stars, and of more stability, was the development of the finer stock companies, of which the most distinguished was Augustin Daly's. In many ways Daly represented the highest idealism that can be expected in the manager of an unendowed theatre. He believed from the bottom of his heart in the value of the best drama, and in the dignity of the actor's art. He knew from practical experience the technique of the drama no less than of the stage, for he could write a successful play as well as direct its production. If he could not foretell a play's success, he was no worse off than any other producer whom the world had thus far known; but he learned at last that the nearest thing to a certainty in the way of a new play was his own rewriting of contemporary comedies by any one of three or four German playwrights. On these he depended far more then on the French who are usually described as his chief props. For the most part, and increasingly as the years went on, his best efforts and his most loving care were devoted to the production of Shakespeare and of certain revivals from the eighteenth century, the very repertories in both respects which had served for the earliest professional companies in America. The concessions he made to popularity from time to time, were made simply in order to take in the money that would make possible the undertaking he cared most about. If he could draw big houses to big plays his cup of content was filled.

Then during the '90's the shadow of the new commercial combinations began to darken his path. One by one the best of his players were drawn off by the lure of larger returns, and year by year he found it more difficult to secure new plays, as the more promising playwrights were bought up by a kind of retaining fee system employed by the syndicate managers. And so the curtain was rung on stock companies like Daly's, the education of actors through a wide experience in many repertories became less common, the vogue of stars—not fixed but twinkling—was established, and with it the system of long runs, and the ethics of Barnum prevailed throughout the country.

At this point Mr. Hornblow's history comes to an end, for this point is the present; but it comes to an unfortunately indeterminate end, and after some self-contradiction, lays the whole blame of the situation on the producers, and calls—mirabile dictu!—for a new Moses to lead the way out of captivity. That is a double mistake; Moses has publicly disqualified himself; and for the last ten years the public have shown that they are slowly groping toward the way themselves. They began with the New Theatre. That it failed within two years is not half so important as that it was founded, that others on smaller scales have been founded and have failed, that municipal theatres have sprung up here and there and are being supported by various plans, that scores on scores of little theatres, neighborhood playhouses, and peoples' country theatres have been founded, that producers like Winthrop Ames and Stuart Walker are established in the popular consciousness, that the Drama League of America is a country-wide organization, and that the printing of plays for a reading public is manyfold its proportions of twenty years ago. The Napoleonic theatrical managers are still in the saddle in America, but the uncommercial stage is coming to be more considerable every season. The leaven of popular intelligence is at work, and the new audience, the new theatre, and the new drama,—combining the best of the old with the best of the new—in due time will come to their own again. PERCY H. BOYNTON.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Foreign Visitor

The Stranger, by Arthur Bullard. New York: The Macmillan Company.

A MAN in the first year of his maturity, thoughtful, travelled, master of languages and experienced in the manners and customs of many lands, comes to New York. He is the son of an American medical missionary in Morocco who had become a Moslem and he himself has been reared in the Mohammedan faith. Now at length he visits for the first time his father's land and after a period of studious loneliness he becomes acquainted with a group of zealous young Americans representative of the higher ideals struggling for recognition in this country: a painter, a novelist, a political reformer, a socialistic and atheistic professor, an efficient practical-minded woman whose life work is the organization of the finances of charities upon sound principles,—and a frail young woman who makes the text and illustrations for children's books and whom an incurable malady has doomed to an early death. His entrance into their lives affects markedly the career and character of several of these people; but by carefully subordinating the parts played by the other members of the group to those played by the painter, the charity worker and the illustrator of children's books, Arthur Bullard, has avoided any too close resemblance to Pippa Passes or to The Passing of the Third Floor Back.

The nearest literary affiliation of this remarkable novel is to a much older kind of book. It is now nearly three centuries and a half since Giovanni Paolo Marana started the vogue of what may be called the Letters of a Foreign Visitor type of fiction and satire in his once famous Espion du Grand Seigneur, known in English as The Turkish Spy. The situation of an intelligent, thoughtful and observant man, placed in the midst of a civilization utterly different from that in which he has been brought up, gave excellent opportunity to drive home the lesson of the great diversity and incongruity of the religious beliefs and moral codes of mankind and of the need to recognize the degree to which individual beliefs and codes are produced by non-rational forces such as race, environment, tradition and education. The corollary that followed from realization of this fact was the necessity of purging the mind of all ideas due to the accident of historical position; to limit belief to those truths acceptable to all; to acknowledge that manners and modes of thought alien from those to which a certain civilization has become accustomed may be as valid as, may be nearer the ideal than, those accepted by that civilization; in a word, to clear the mind of prejudices. Such lines of thought appealed to the cosmopolitanism characteristic of the eighteenth century. In our own time the same train of ideas has been followed successfully by Mr. Lowes Dickinson. It has remained for Mr. Bullard, while discarding the convention of the letter-form, to employ a similar theme brilliantly in a novel dealing with twentieth-century New York.

For the development of such a theme the author has many happy qualifications. His power of acute observation of modern society was shown in the earlier novels which he wrote under the pen-name of "Albert Edwards." His knowledge of the ideals of the Moslem world has already appeared in his book, The Barbary Coast, written under his own name. The juxtaposition and entanglement of these two conflicting intellectual interests make capital material for fiction. There can be no doubt of the value of such a book in our present pressing need for a cosmopolitan point of view. The question is whether Mr. Bullard's mind and art are not too refined to enforce his lesson in the virile fashion necessary if it is to command attention.

It would have been easy to evolve from his material a series of harshly satiric rasping scenes filled with crude contrasts of Western with Oriental manners and ideals. Mr. Bullard avoids anything so obvious. There is satire and reproof in plenty, but it is subtle, restrained, often by implication rather than outright, and placed second in interest to the delicate love-story between the Oriental visitor, Donald Lane, and Eunice Bender who employs her scanty dole of life in fashioning delight for children. From the Stranger the painter who has lost touch with his art through an unfortunate and unsympathetic marriage gains advice that leads to a drastic but simple solution of his domestic difficulties. From the Stranger the atheistic socialist learns something both of the Moslem idea of God and of the practical socialism of Morocco. Through intercourse with him the successful organizer of charity finances gets a suspicion of distrust in the all-sufficiency of her gospel of Efficiency. From him the delicately beautiful artist whose work had been looked down upon by her sturdy and practical friend, who had become reconciled to pity as the only meed bestowable upon her, and who is soon to die, learns that there is another ideal possible than the American one of robust physical health and that into even her wan life love can come.

As Mr. Bullard has avoided the rocks of mere Menckenesque satire, so has he steered clear of the equally dangerous shallow pools of sentimentalism. The beauty in his book has in it no touch of the maudlin. He has not achieved a great book—there are few such in the world—but he has penetrated pretty nearly to the core of some of the counterfeits that time will break. His story is interesting, thoughtful, reasoned, suggestive. It offers the balance of an alien ideal with which to weigh the shibboleths of modern America: education, reform, health, progress, efficiency.

S. C. C.

From The Yiddish

A Lithuanian Village. By Leon Kobrin. Authorized translation from the Yiddish by Isaac Goldberg, Ph. D. New York: Brentano's.

THE ascendency of Yiddish in the literary world is one of the outstanding phenomena of the last half-century. When one remembers that almost until yesterday Yiddish was either ignored or despised by most of the enlightened even of Jews, one cannot but wonder at the high place it has nevertheless succeeded in achieving for itself.

The Jewish Art Theater was one of the very few places—possibly the only place—in all New York last season where drama of worth was given a hearing. And those afforded the access will testify that of all the newspapers in America today, few other than those printed in Yiddish make even a pretense to literary importance. Possibly that is because the English-reading public goes to the magazines for its periodical literature, while the Yiddish reader can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have recourse only to newspapers. But compared even with the American magazine, the Yiddish daily ranks superior in at least one essential literary quality. At times, it is true, you will read in the Yiddish periodicals contributions rather roughhewn and in a taste not exactly "so." But despite such defects, the literary pages of The Day and the Jewish Morning Journal and the Forward are unique, incomparable, in America today. They are so because they are replete with that first virtue of modern literature: they are true, completely true, to life.

The credit for that is due probably to the readers of Yiddish as much as to the writers thereof. The Yiddish-reading public must be a peculiarly intelligent and gifted one if it will encourage—as it does—the astoundingly honest work of Cahan and Asch and Raisin and Zevin. It must be at once both very naive and very worldly wise if it will accept—as it undoubtedly does—the sketch and the narrative and the "unhappy-ender" as regular literary fare.

That is one's first reaction to A Lithuanian Village: a sense of wonder at the rare mental caliber of the Yiddish public. For the book is worlds removed from the commonplace and the ordinarily "acceptable"; indeed, to be appreciated and enjoyed it demands a literary taste of quite a high order. In a series of sharp vignettes it presents to us an environment almost extinct today—the environment of a drab little village in the pale. In restrained and simple language a restrained and simple folk is depicted dragging its weary body and soul through the whole cycle of the monotonous year. Only on its holidays and its annual fair day does it feelingly live, and then it lives hectically, madly, with abandon. But the rest of the year it merely exists saprophitycally.

The whole work is frankly realistic, softening no oaths and tempering no vices. One is never moved to suspect that the author is "toning-down" his colors. The hatreds, the jealousies, the bickerings, meannesses and fears are portrayed no less clearly than the loves and aspirations of those wretched Lithuanian Jews. Yet withal, it is a refreshing bit of reading, for despite the bitterness and ugliness floating like scum on the waters of that ghetto life, one never quite loses consciousness of the great deep cleanness beneath it all. In that Kobrin proves himself a master: his realism is suggestive and translucent, not blunt and opaque. It never staggers or blinds one, as does the realism of Caradoc Evans, for instance. You read how those Jews half strangle each other in their efforts to earn a kopeck or two; you hear those bitter wives curse at their stalls, and see those stunted husbands pore over their holy books; you feel the grimy superstition that clogs the daily life of those villagers, know the smallness of their horizon and the narrowness of their vision—and you love them nevertheless. And somehow you are impressed that the hegira of their offspring to the land where "Jews can be policemen," was a far from woeful event in the history of the soul of the New World.

Dr. Goldberg's tranlation is admirable. Only those acquainted with the wild brawling nature of Yiddish, that polyglot gibberish naked of syntax and choked with allusion, can understand just how well the translator has accomplished his task.

Unless the English public is as sightless as Mr. Mencken would have us believe it to be, one may confidently expect this first of Kobrin's books to appear in English will be far from the last.

LEWIS BROWN.

Masks, by George Middleton. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

TO speak of the drama as the most impersonal form of art is one of the commonplaces of criticism; it has remained a critical commonplace despite the example of playwrights whose work is stamped, like a lyric poem, with their own individuality. George Middleton is among their number. His plays mirror a certain personality, a certain milieu. The same set of characters is repeated in one situation after another; they belong to a comfortable middle class, becoming unreal when they pass out of it either to wealth or vagabondage.

The prevailing mood is that of disillusion. One of the six plays in his last volume is concerned with a writer who views indifferently his wife's amour with a banker; he has his own designs, one discovers, on the banker's daughter. Another describes the discomfiture of an actress, an arriviste, who tries to be sincere for once and comes near losing her position as society lion. Tides is kindly and bitter at the same time; it is the picture of an internationalist beaten by the war, vanquished by his need for being at least once on the side of the majority and sharing the comfort and warmth of the crowd. All these plays are savagely polite, showing the ambition to achieve great satire without the ability to bite very deep.

Their heroes are of two types; either they are striving ruthlessly for a artistic or financial success, or else they are broken idealists. The first type, disagreeable as it may be, represents an ideal to Mr. Middleton; the second type comes nearer to his actuality.

In the title play of the volume, the two characters face each other. The idealist is Grant Williams, a dramatist; he has just sold himself out, rewriting an honest tragedy into a Broadway success. With the promise of a thousand a week in front of him, he is still unsatisfied, and his own created characters come to life to haunt him. Tom Robertson is one of these; as hero of the earlier tragedy he had been willing to sacrifice everything, his family included, for the attainment of honest artistic expression. Against the dramatist he holds this grievance: that he has been remodelled into the leading man of a milk-and-water comedy. "When an artist deceives himself," he tells Grant, "when he turns his soul into money, he dies."

One divines that the play is an autobiographical drama with George Middleton playing both of the leading roles. He descends sometimes to the hokum of Broadway (remember that he is the author of Hit-the-Trail-Holliday and Polly with a Past); on such occasions he is none other than Grant Williams. When he writes what to his mind are the honest, unprofitable plays of this volume, he is the ruthless artist, Tom Robertson. He was faced by the antinomy of art and commerce, and he has at least made an excellent play out of his compromise. M. C.

Contributors

H. N. BRAILSFORD, the English journalist, is the author of Across the Blockade.

NORMAN HAPGOOD was formerly editor of Harper's Weekly and more recently minister to Denmark. He has just published The Advancing Hour which was reviewed in our issue of August 18th.

STARK YOUNG, professor of English at Amherst and author of Addio Madretta, has just returned from spending several months in Italy.

JOHN DEWEY is the author of The School and Society, How to Think, The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy. He has recently made an extended trip through China and Japan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED